

# DOWN THE LINE

ISSUE 018 | AUGUST 2015



## UNTEACHERS

*A Human Comedy* might  
just be the best  
album you haven't  
heard...

RIKI MICHELE

GLOWER

HARRY BARNES

DW DUNPHY

STAINED GLASS RAINBOWS

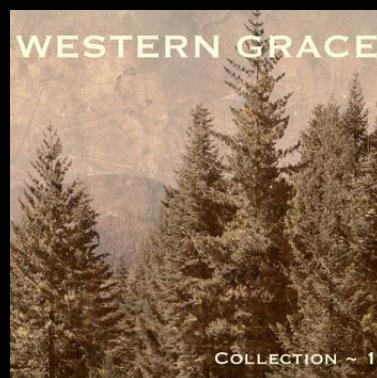
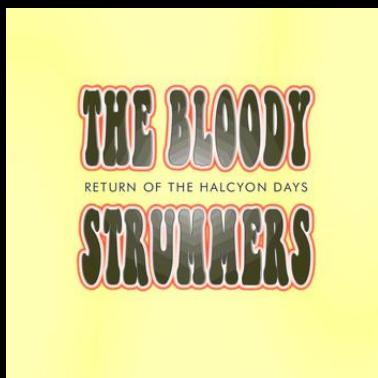
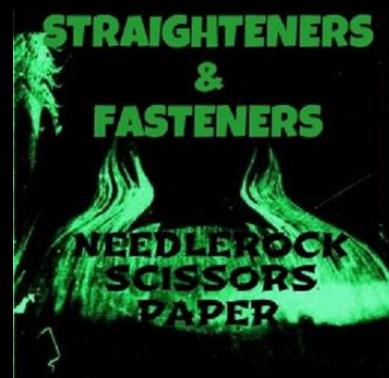
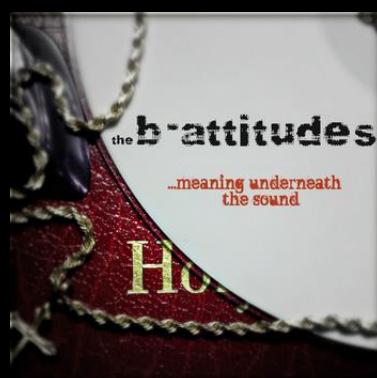
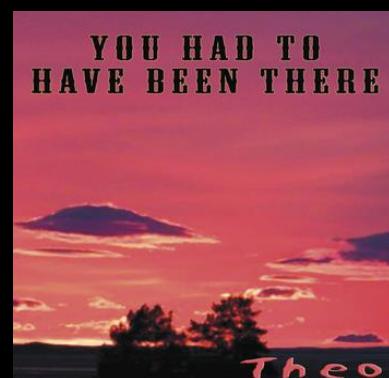
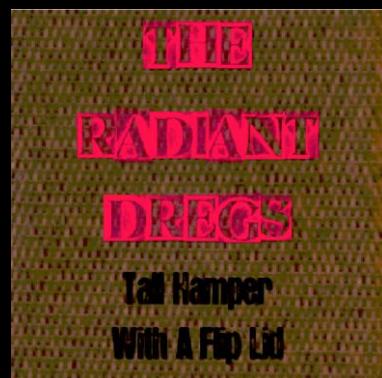
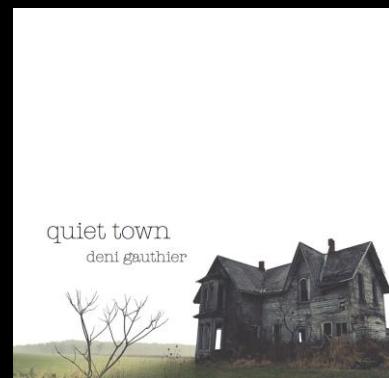
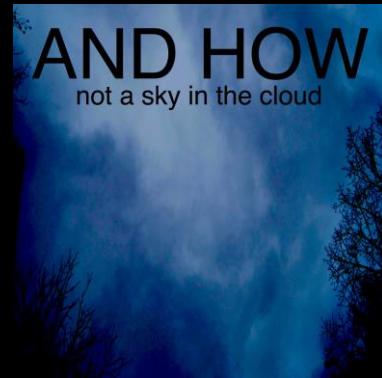
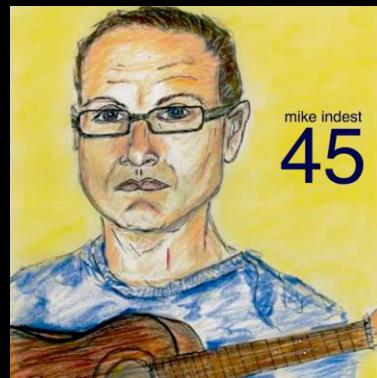
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# BASEMENT TAPES [G1/2]



# BASEMENT TAPES



NEVER  
ENDING  
ROCK

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# NEWS

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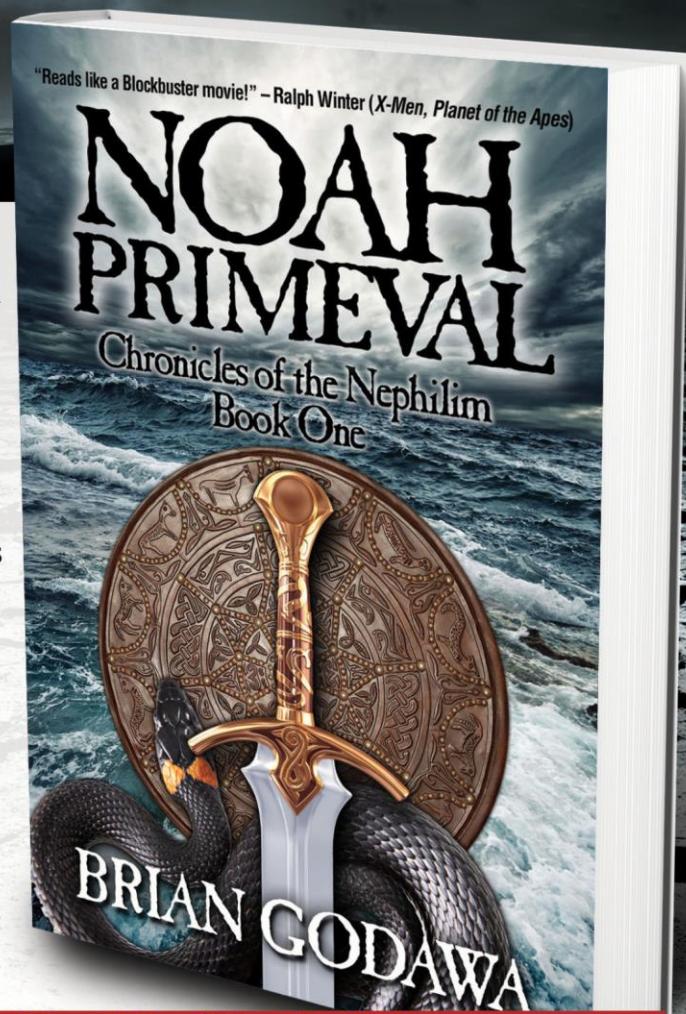
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# UNTEACHERS

***A Human Comedy* might just be the best album you haven't heard...**

The Unteachers album *A Human Comedy* made one of our Top 10 lists for last year, and funny enough it also made my list back in 2013. Stephen Mark Sorro (Tantrum of the Muse) is the man behind the band, and we were slated to do an interview a long time ago; fortunately, we finally got it done, but I wish that I had made it happen to coincide with the release of *A Human Comedy*. It is here now, and Stephen gives us the rundown on who is (and isn't) in the band, how it came together, and thoughts about the future.



SNACKS

SNACKERS

TEACHERS

TEACHERS

TEACHERS

### Steve Ruff: Can you give me the breakdown on who is in the band and who recorded on the album?

Steven Mark Sorro: Unteachers is me myself and I. Sadly, I am without a drummer and bassist. Unteachers is primarily my vision, but I don't prefer to write everything myself and would much prefer to build off of the chemistry of a fantastic rhythm section, but I struggle with finding people who can play. I am actually trying to get Udrick (TOTM) to play for the next album/live. He is so busy though. Jim (TOTM) also agreed he would do bass, but he is literally on the other side of the country from me, so I am trying to avoid file passing type stuff. It's a bummer. I am not your typical "impossible to work for control freak" and actually, within the realms of what makes Unteachers work, there is a ton of freedom for people to bring their own vision to the table, but the problem is where I am located, there is just no music scene. It's very unfortunate. I'm open to audition anybody in or around Lancaster, PA, where I am currently located. Distance has played a major part in not having the band together. When we would get together, it felt like 1 step forward, 2 steps backward. It was just too much of a musical project to not dedicate more time to. Sad.

When I started making *A Human Comedy* back in 2010 (and honestly, I tried to make it in 2007 also) it was just me and my cousin Travis Turner, who played in Crutch, Solamors, and Aletheian, and he comes from a progressive metal side, which was perfect because I wanted to do something more progressive this time around. About a year into arranging the songs, we added Josh Kale to the mix. Josh is childhood friend of Travis's, and I have known him for quite some time also. He had been playing bass for a bunch of projects locally, mostly with Travis. Once we had a power trio, we had the challenge of nailing down the songs as a live band, as well as find the time to get to the studio to record songs. We all lived 2 hours apart. The studio was far from most of us. It was brutal.

But despite the reality that Unteachers is a solo project of mine, the record is all real performances, microphones leaning on amps and drums. Travis, Josh and myself, and we poured our hearts out onto these songs and they are very personal to each of us.

### How did you guys all meet, and what bands have you played in before?

People may know this but I had some short lived mild success in a touring band called Tantrum Of The Muse, which had a reputation for being confrontational, and angry. We wanted to make people uncomfortable, and that we did. Due to this reputation, the band seemed to have a lasting effect on many people, especially if you saw TOTM live. It was pretty intense stuff.

As I stated, Travis had been playing in mostly local bands that were not really going anywhere. I knew he was a complete

power house of a drummer who just struggled to find the right band, and I pride myself in setting him up with the Crutch/Aletheian guys, who would go on to do some fantastic work together

Josh Kale was in a band called My Brother The Wood Maker, with Travis, and writes solo mostly. He was the only one who unfortunately did not tour or anything like that.

### Give me the breakdown on how the album is available...

Because of the weird state that the "band" is in, Veritas Vinyl decided to pay for half, and I funded the other half, which is why it never came out last year, despite being turned in. So, I paid for half. The album is available through Veritas Vinyl. They are practically giving the album away, which is kind of a bittersweet thing I guess, but you can buy the album from them for like \$12 or something crazy, on vinyl. 3 different colors.

It is also available through Veritas Vinyl as a digital download, and I will be selling the vinyl also, and will also offer some album themed shirts, through my own moniker The Tourist Trap, which is a podcast show I do. This really fun surreal tripped out musical show, which is now branching out into record label territory. Basically I plan to fund and publish all my own past, present and future music through The Tourist Trap. You can order the album both digitally/LP at [www.veritasvinyl.net](http://www.veritasvinyl.net) and definitely check out the podcast at [www.thetouristtrap.net](http://www.thetouristtrap.net).

### What was the writing process for the album?

Well, after Tantrum Of The Muse broke up, I kind of intended to just keep that vision going through a new band with a new name. I didn't want to just move on with TOTM without the guys I had in the band. There is no way to be TOTM without Jim and Udrick, but because I wrote most of those songs, at least the backbone of the songs, I was very confident in moving on and doing something else, something better. So after TOTM broke up I started to demo the songs that I intended to use for a 3rd TOTM. In some ways *A Human Comedy* is that record still, because while it did take on different forms throughout the years of making it, I purposely maintained an element of the sound TOTM had because I hated how TOTM ended, and that was very natural, too. Also, I have memories of thinking I wanted the follow up to TOTM's last album to be more positive and not so depressing. So basically I started writing around 2004. I wrote a few songs, then stopped because things were not working out. Then in 2007, I started Unteachers as a live band in Baltimore, MD with some friends, and I had written "Cusp," "Higher Horses," and "Fear Of Silence" during that time. Things did not work out, pretty typical of post TOTM music for me.

Then in 2010, I started working with Travis, and by then I had the idea that I wanted the album to showcase my journey in finding the true gospel/Christianity for the very first time in my life. I was raised Christian, I believed Jesus was God, but I was

broken. Too much weird charismatic insanity growing up. I left the church around 1997 and did not walk back into church with any intention of having a church community again until 2008/9. So its 2010, I'm committed to a great church, and I'm getting a lot of healing from my bitterness and the confusion. I'm learning about God's grace, I had really discovered Jesus in a very real way, and this was inspiring to me, so i had decided i wanted to show a very real time line from being de-churched and broken, full of fear and anxiety, to finding peace in Jesus, and wanting to share that change, kind of a testimony, on the album. Its kind of like a backward "The Wall" by Pink Floyd. Heh.

But apart from writing the songs, when we had that brief moment as a 3 piece, I just demoed the songs and hummed the melodies as I was working out my lyrics, and the guys in the band took the parts and for the most part improved on them, and made it their own. Travis had some direction with what I was looking for in each song but he wrote his drum parts. He would do something too straight forward and aggressive over a part, and I would say to him "No man, do some Stewart Copeland over this riff" and he would immediately know what the feel should be. Josh took the riffs and added some things to what was already written and made things a little more colorful because he is a bassist. There are some bass lines on the album where the timing was already weird between bass/guitar and the drums, but then Josh would go off into some even weirder timing, and then all 3 of us were doing something totally clashing but it worked. "Swim With A knife," in particular, is an example of this. And all 3 of us had some say over the other elements. Josh came up with the xylophone melody and played that. I did most of the keyboards and weird stuff you hear. The theramin you hear on the album is a 99 cent app from my smart phone I plugged straight into the mix. Our buddy Seth Luzier played some keys. Rick (TOTM) did some percussion. It was a very creative and inspired album to make. It took forever because of endless problems, and schedule conflicts, as well as being on a zero dollar budget, but we finally finished this thing.

#### **Are there any bands in particular that have influenced your playing and writing?**

Oh yes. For me personally, for this particular album, I'd say Rush. Jane's Addiction. The Cure. King Crimson. Melvins. Peter Gabriel. Ministry. I was pulling from a lot of 90s stuff, a lot of prog stuff. Travis and Josh were into some of the same stuff, and a bunch of stuff I never really listened to. Everyone had a song bank of their own they were pulling from. We all dig on Kings X early stuff. The Police/Sting. We would sit around and listen to Soul Cages from Sting sometimes, ha-ha. Nobody would understand how this led to the kind of music we were making. But there is a ton of metal in there, a lot of 90s alternative music. We are all in our 30s so there were not a lot of new bands although some newer exciting bands played a part. Big Business is one of my favorites. They take the sludge doom sound and just turn it on its head and make it so exciting. Swans, Wovenhand. Torche, we like

them too. But for me, I really wanted to mix things up with old school and modern stuff.

#### **How did you end up with Veritas Vinyl?**

Well, I am friends with Greg Dimick from Crux/Empty Tomb. He probably thinks I forgot this but he is fully responsible with passing us over to Jesse Jeremiah from VV. Originally the idea was to do a split 7" with Crux, but they canceled for some weird reason. I think their singer was unable to do it. So anyway, we had originally planned to record half of the songs for an EP and then we were going to raise some support with that EP to make the 2nd half of the songs. *A Human Comedy* was always, to me, seen as a 2 part thing. When you flip over the record, you will feel a different vibe on that 2nd half. It aligns musically, with the lyrics. It's a weird thing, but anyway, so we were already well into our 1st attempt to record this album, originally just half of it, when Jesse called me. He offered to make a full length and wanted to help us out and we greatly appreciated it, and we were really excited. From there, we basically just went back into the practice room and hashed out the 2nd half of songs, and then we started over in the studio afterwards. I gotta say, there is just nothing like VV out there. A cool dude, who works really hard, and wants to release records to enjoy the format, and to help Christians who make music and to help them to pursue the music... it's just totally unheard of.

That's what is so frustrating about the lack of VV sales. He keeps his prices so dirt cheap. He isn't making money off of the bands. He literally just helps bands out, and he loves vinyl and that's the format he works with. I get file sharing and downloading. I don't personally subscribe to the idea that it's killing off music, or music business. But to not support labels like this when you do buy physical music, is just silly and stupid to me. There are all kinds of fantastic releases on CD, MP3, and LP from VV and people need to really check it out, because it would be a damn shame for something like VV to go away. I think he is putting out some cool stuff as of late. Easter Teeth, Slaves BC, Place Of Skulls/In-Graved, The Crucified, Government Hate Mail, which features members of The Clergy and Crux, Grace And Thieves... it's a lot of cool high quality stuff. And now our record, and there is nothing like *A Human Comedy* coming out anywhere else, so it's just really exciting to be a part of something that has integrity.

#### **When I listen to Unteachers I get a completely different style than when listening to TOTM, how do you classify UT? It sounds like a healthy mix of hardcore and traditional elements of metal and heavy rock.**

Well, it's no surprise that as I get older, I am less interested in screaming or destroying my body and vocal chords. I discovered early on that I can sing well, and actually, I can sing much better than I even do on my albums. TOTM was our attempt at doing something like Today Is The Day in terms of heaviness or power trio freak out type of music. Temple Of The Morning Star was a

Morning Star was a massive influence, and then when we went through their back catalog, to records like Willpower, Supernova, Self-titled, we were just floored by that stuff. We also pulled a lot from Shudder To Think, a fantastic art rock band from DC, used to be on Dischord Records. They have some amazing music. Mr. Bungle was also a huge influence. Disco Volante was on constant rotation. We tried to really be this super charged heavy band that would constantly change genres of music within minutes. It was important, then, to do death metal, indie rock, and industrial all within 2 minutes. HAHA. But the songs weren't as fleshed out and mature. They were just a reflection of the personal chaos in our lives and the lack of maturity or professional playing of the band. What made TOTM so unique and special was that we somehow got lucky and pulled all of the sounds off and had one of the craziest live shows. Again I say, if you saw TOTM live, you understood what we were about. The CD's were not the place to try and make sense of TOTM. Way too many influences old and new at the time.

Unteachers, as I stated, began as a natural progression from TOTM. I still maintain that it is a better recorded, better written, better performed band, and the songs are better songs. It's not as magical to people who saw TOTM because we don't play out in Unteachers, and when TOTM was playing shows the scene was different and it was still possible for people to be blown away by live music. It was still exciting to not have everything at the click of a button, or spoil every surprise. It was still possible to show up at a venue, and not know what is going to happen and be completely floored by some band you didn't see coming. So, all of this plays a factor.

Unteachers is a better musical experience, but people will always want to compare it to TOTM. It's fine by me at least with *A Human Comedy*, because of the origins of the band and those songs. But the new music I write has nothing to do with TOTM. I cared a lot about the TOTM fans and what they were going to think, and that is just poison. It's toxic to creating art when you care what people think. I don't care what people think about the new music, but I am thrilled if they connect with it and want to follow along and enjoy the purity of natural progression, and inspiration. The new direction is going to be a real shift. Musically these days I am way more interested in the kinds of music that creates atmosphere, and takes its time to get to where it is going, and eventually crushes your mind and spirit in the process. If I can listen to a song and then it stays with me for long periods of time, creating wonder and causing me to try to understand it, than that will definitely inspire me and cause me to want to aspire to that kind of thinking and writing.

**I know you're a big fan of the Swans, favorite Swans album and why?**

Wow. Yes, I am a big fan of Swans, and picking a favorite is really hard because it depends on my mood. When I need to let go of some emotional or physical energy, I will usually listen very

loudly to *Filth*, or *Cop*, or something from the 80s. I really love the song "Your Property" from *Cop*. But if pressed, I would have to say the mid-section of their body of work is probably my favorite. The really loud stuff that is really musical, like *White Light From The Mouth Of Infinity*. There is a beautiful song on there called "Failure" that really brings to mind a lot of what I struggle with from day to day. Their new stuff is great, but some of it is really too long. I get overwhelmed with 2+ hour long albums. It's just so much to absorb. I'm a busy man. You know it's funny, one of the greatest albums from Swans is a live album they released a few years back called *We Rose From Your Bed With The Sun In Our Heads*. it's so amazing. It sounds so good, and the versions of songs like "Beautiful Child" are downright terrifying. I advise fans to find that album and blare it into your ear holes. It's so intense and exhausting emotionally. I really love "Burning World" too, but I guess Gira hates it, hahaha. He's nuts. It's fantastic.

**What are some of your most recent favorite albums and by who?**

Well I have really been enjoying the new record by Mew, called +- (plus minus) It's not my favorite of theirs. For that, you'd have to check out *And The Glass Handed Kites* which is one of the most creatively constructed albums I've heard in the last 20 years. It's magic stuff. Their last 3 albums have been amazing.

I really am enjoying that new Wovenhand album, *Refractory Obdurate*. Such a heavy sound. That's probably my favorite album from them. Just love it.

I got into KENmode recently, and they are unrelentingly heavy. Their latest that is coming out is recorded by Steve Albini, and it has this really awesome non-metal touch to it. Really brings out their noise rock side more. I'm really excited for that album.

You may laugh but I gotta say that latest album by Ryan Adams hit that sweet spot with me also. Beautiful songs. Killer guitar stuff. Really great music to drive to, or just be outside while listening to it.

**The album has been out for a while now, how do you feel the response has been?**

I keep referring to the album as "The greatest album of 2014 that nobody heard". I cannot blame anybody but myself I guess. No shows. No real presence. I'm terrible at networking. I use Facebook and Twitter, but I really have no idea what I am doing to reach the masses without playing all the time. We plan to do some select shows in the future, but it's just so hard to do it at a serious level when you cannot commit to constant working and playing. I hate that the album took so much out of me, and I worked so hard on it, and it came out and fell on deaf ears. Those who did buy it, or listen to it raved about how completely floored they were by it. Every single review I read, and I am not

exaggerating, said in exact words "It. Blew. Me. Away"!!! It sits on my shelf, waiting to be heard by somebody.

People complain all the time about music production, and bands not doing music like the old days. I present our album to them and say "buy this, it's exactly what you want" but if even a 3rd of the people who liked our Facebook page bought the album, we'd be sitting pretty good financially to make our next one. I don't understand any of it, and I guess I have to go play some shows for people to give a crap.

**How difficult has it been to get the word out about the album, and from an artist perspective how can listeners help spread the word?**

Anybody who has the album currently and knows people who would be blessed in some way by what it says, or how it plays out, devote some time to stopping them, telling them to look up and away from their damn phone for just 2 minutes so you can talk to them, look them straight in the eyes and say "Hello, remember music? Remember bands writing original songs, and recording them without fake computer software? Remember when mics were used to make albums? Remember when bands played and let the humanity breathe in a performance? Yeah, there is a new album in 2015 that you can buy now for dirt cheap and its fun and you will enjoy it"

Another way to spread the word is just let us know who we should talk to. I know young bands know where to promote their stuff, I'm not good at those things. Let me know who should hear it. Come to me and say "Stephen, this is where people will dig your record" and we will get it to them.

Spread the word any way you can. This is how DIY rock and roll survives!!!

**What are your thoughts on file sharing and people passing around independent music for free?**

If file sharing my music allows for a bunch of people to hear my music and buy my album on vinyl, because let's face it, nobody who wants our album is only going to want mp3s anyway, than do it. Torrent the hell out of it. I don't care. I think the argument about "pirating music is not a victim-less crime" is dumb. If I take a CD off of your merch booth and its 1 less physical copy you made, its stealing. If I take your CD, but it's still there in its place as if I did not take it, who cares?! Because the problem is that people want to be paid for selling their music, but they don't make if affordable or on a format people care about. And certainly there will be the digital only crowd who will get your files and never support you. Who cares? The ones who will buy your album, will spend \$20, then come to your show and buy a \$20 shirt, and if a band is popular enough to do a Kickstarter, the fans will spend hundreds to fund something they believe in.

The war against digital downloading is lost. People torrent my albums. I always tell them, "if you are going to spread my files across the internet, make sure they are high quality and in fact, full album, with the artwork included" I don't want you to hack my work, just share the love.

A practical answer also would be, I have been curious about an album, or gotten sick of the CD getting scratched and downloaded something so I didn't have to buy it for the 3rd, 4th time, many times. I have downloaded stuff just to hear it and to see if I was into it enough to buy the album on vinyl. If anybody came to my house and saw my record/CD/cassette collection I would never be considered a thief, because I paid for a lot of physical music. Who cares if I wanted to fill my iPod also and got the mp3s, I still buy from the bands.

My buddy of mine from the band Inhale Exhale once told me "we went from a touring band that sells merch to being a traveling store that plays music" and I think that is what sums up where the real money is made in music. Touring, playing shows, selling merchandise, and letting your music be heard however it's going to be heard in the internet age. That's my take on it really. If i was playing shows, I would have stuff there for people to buy to support me that they cannot get for free via a file on the internet.

**What format do you favor: vinyl, CD or download?**

Vinyl all the way. If I buy a CD it's only because I can't get it any other way. I rip it to iTunes and then it sits on my shelf for me to point at and go "check that out." My favorite way to buy music is to buy an album on vinyl for no more than \$20 and get a digital download included. If you sell a record without the digital download, I think that's a huge mistake and encourages more pirating. Most people who sell records care about that stuff. While on the subject, this new wave of reissued vinyl is absurdly priced and they should be ashamed of selling an album for \$50. That takes advantage of the last bit of humanity that is left who will support physical media. The few and proud still come to you and you piss on them with your prices. So terrible!!!! Vinyl records can fluctuate depending on packaging and that's OK, but if you sell me a Nirvana reissue for \$40 you are drunk! I've had that album on cassette, and CD 10 times already. Enough is enough!!!

**What future plans do you have for UT, and will there ever be the possibility of live shows?**

Yes, live shows. In talking with the band, we agreed we would want to play out but only at fun places where we would have a good time. We realize we will never have the kind of musical life where we can travel a lot and tour every other month, so we just want to enjoy ourselves. Get on the right gigs. Play for fun. Make it awesome and exclusive to the folks who get out and see it. I don't want to overexpose or underexpose it.

I'm writing a new album. No title as of yet, but I do have some great song ideas lined up. Really excited about this new sound. Really looking forward to releasing something totally fresh and far removed from *A Human Comedy*. That was closure. That was letting the world know that I can still bang my head and sing my ass off. Now I just want to delve a bit deeper into some of the weirder territory I find myself in when I listen to music. More of the musical influences that never get a say on past releases. We hope to get into a studio of some format in the next year. It will be a while. We will most likely totally fund our own album this time around, unless somebody wants to put it out. It will be a vinyl release. I'd also like to get a small run of CD's pressed of *A Human Comedy* but that will only happen once we get more demand than we have had so far.

**Top 3 torture methods for shitty people who are late on stuff that really matters...like doing an interview:**

HAHAHA. Kill them with kindness. Over and over again. I get a sense that you are joking here about yourself, and I too have taken far too long to get back to you. Thanks for the opportunity to speak out about what's happening. I really appreciate Down The Line, and I wish you guys well. Blessings man!!!

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RIKI MICHELE

## A Conversation With Ojo

**Ojo Taylor:** I think it might be fair to say that most people think of you in a musical capacity as a vocalist and yet a number of the songs were written exclusively by you. How did you write them, and what did you write them on? What was the writing process like for you?

Riki Michele: First a little backstory. Songwriting is a strange thing for me. I have had a sort of love/hate relationship at times with the process. I prefer to do it for myself but the fact that I've always been surrounded by some of my favorite songwriters, and have followed such strong female writers most of my life has inspired but also hindered me. I may have sat on that part of my expression out of fear. Some of it was fear of rejection by those writers close to me, but a lot of it was fear of my own scrutiny. I had an internal bar set for myself that was probably misguided and unrealistic. I'd say I started shedding that fear when I went into the studio with Julian Kindred several years ago, and have grown exponentially since then. I've kept a journal on and off, and when the door opened to do this record I had absolutely, well almost absolutely, no fear of putting my life's experience to music.

I hear melody lines first, then I go and plink it out on the Rhodes and then I usually start singing some nonsense words that lead into a thought or feeling. Then I start scribbling. I usually scribble in note pads. I have to have Bic ball point pens...soft, fat tips on soft paper. I have found paper made of recycled stone that is my favorite; it feels like you're writing on butter. Then I rewrite and rewrite and scribble out and rewrite and most of the time go back to my first lines. Deadlines are my friends as I will usually wait until almost the last minute, but that's just how I roll.

One of the songs on the record, "The Sweetness", I actually wrote in the late '90's, and it was originally about my move from Cali to Nashville during a very dark and painful time where healing and light awaited. Over the years that song has resurfaced and become relevant in different situations and continues to be a force for some reason. I've changed it a bit for this record and it's one of my favorites still. Some of the other songs were written with my producer and friend, Margaret Becker. I would share my concept with her, text her a snippet of me singing into the phone and then we'd Skype with me sitting at the Rhodes and her on her guitar and work it out. Maggie is amazing to write with. She empowers, educates, uplifts and serves. She does not try to take the reins but clears the junk off the pathway so your true self and message can get through. I feel like all the songs on this record say exactly what my heart needed to say.

**It also might be fair to say that most people think of you**

**primarily in a musical capacity and yet you are a visual artist and sculptor as well. How do your multiple creative selves coexist and in what ways do they intersect or interact? How do you balance all this and keep your art a priority with holding down the fort as a wife and mother too?**

How do I balance it all and be a mom and wife too? Well that is a mighty fine question Ojo and the answer is: POORLY! You know, it baffles me too. I've sung since I was able to talk and have always been interested in art, so even though I've tried throughout my whole life to just pick one, I can't do it. It's like one can't exist without the other. When I was recording *Surround Me*, I had just started a soap company with my friend Lisa Michaels and we called it Starlet Lounge. We made soap and bath salts and lip balm. So fun! I remember Julian saying, "Have you ever *just* done music?" The answer was and still is, "no". Life would be a lot easier if I could. But as it is, what ends up happening most of the time is that I have a boatload of creative ideas, start a few projects and finish fewer. And I've decided that's okay. I do my best to stay on task and breathe.

After I recorded *Surround Me*, I got pregnant with my first little human and I took a pottery class out of desperation to keep myself from an incessant quest for something sweet. Lord have mercy I had such a sweet tooth that I NEVER had before pregnancy. Anywho, I was hooked on pottery immediately and have been working with clay now for about 13 years. I have a studio space and a kiln and I try and go there every day and get my hands dirty. I am fortunate, so very fortunate, to be able to follow my creative endeavors and I don't take a minute of that for granted. It is my job.

I'm taking electric guitar lessons from my friend Joey Harris (The Beat Farmers) and I work that into my day as a part of my job as well. After the kids get home from school is when family time and housework kicks in. And what I've discovered at this point in my life is that the housework will always be there. In three short years my first baby human will be driving. DRIVING Joey!!!! It will all get done when it needs to get done, but the main goal is being present with my family, loving my peeps around me and doing good work whether it's music or pottery. I'll let you know when I've got that down.

**Can you talk about your musical evolution, from what I would imagine was a very tough job in having to individuate from all that was Adam Again, to this album and finding your own voice? What were the important milestones along the way?**

I feel like I've gone through so many transitions, changes and life lessons since my time with Adam Again that all played a part in my musical growth and transformation. Age

and experience are really to blame. When I was in Adam Again, I was a very small part of the actual creative process. Most of the time I was fine with that role; sometimes I wasn't. I was so young though and did not really have the chops to contribute much, or so I felt. Gene was the head of that circus and I was happy swinging on the trapeze....most of the time.

My Adam Again story, as you know, is an intense, emotional and complicated story, but a necessary one, as it was the platform and diving board that I was able to spring from. I learned so many things that I still hold on to. Gene's writing is amazing, and I'd say he paid a visit or two in my heart when I was writing for this record. I have many other muses and teachers that have been with me from Adam Again until now. My recording experiences with you, The Choir, Terry Taylor, Julian Kindred and my time with my bands in Nashville were all huge milestones and learning experiences for me.

The music I listen to inspires and educates me all the time and ranges from prog rock to trance to dance to tribal. For the last two years or so I've been so moved by a band called 1 Giant Leap and their whole recording experience; that played a huge part in my writing. These two guys, Jamie Catto and Duncan Bridgeman, filmed a series called "What About Me" where they took topics like spiritually, abuse, sex, and religion, and interviewed people from all over the world, and also recorded musicians from all over the world on the same songs using those same topics. The outcome is incredible. It's this compilation of music and interviews that rocked me to my core. It not only spoke to me on a musical level but on a very deep internal and spiritual level. I was deeply inspired.

My ultimate landing on the heart of where I wanted to go with this record was inspired by Maggie. When we had that first writing experience together she encouraged me to get to the heart of me and what I wanted to put out there...to take complete charge of my project and lead it to its proper end. I finally felt like I was collaborating with someone who got my vision and who was joining me, not doing me a favor.

**You dedicate this album to your sister. In what ways does the experience of losing her way too early show up in the songs? How has it altered your life perspective and worldview?**

Losing my sister is a big one. I think it's best to tell you how it all went down to make sense of where I am today. We moved from Nashville, where we'd lived for 15 years, to San Diego, and settled right in. My family was ecstatic that we were close again. After about a year and a half Dave lost his job and things became financially difficult for us. We started thinking about going back to Nashville and eventually did.

Once we were back and just starting to settle in, we got a call that my sister was really sick. She thought she had the flu. Within a couple of weeks she was diagnosed with colon cancer that had moved into her liver. It seemed like she was fine, then she was fighting for her life in a matter of weeks.

I flew home to Cali a couple of times to be with her. The second time I flew home we were all standing around her bed in the hospital, my parents, my brother, her husband and her three kids, and she quietly left us. Her exit was so peaceful and our reaction was anything but. Being present in her leaving and sharing in that much pain coming from the people I love the most changed me. Changed everything. I am still trying to make sense of how, but a different me came home to Nashville. When I got back Dave knew. We both understood. We had to go back. I had to go home and be near my family. Dave and the kids understood, and there were some compelling reasons for them to want to make the move back as well.

Death and moving are two of the most stressful things a person can go through. We had a death and two moves in less than a year. It was hard. Hard for us to leave, hard to go back, hard for our friends in Nashville, hard all around. But the peace when we got back to San Diego I cannot describe. I don't know if it was exhaustion or gratitude or brokenness but I cried constantly for days with the overwhelming sense of peace that we were in the right place (enter "The Sweetness"). We were home and close to my family. That experience infused not only my songwriting, but everything.

I try and take nothing for granted. I "love a little harder", I am more aware of the importance of saying what you mean and meaning what you say. I am better about staying in touch with my family and those close to me. But I am also more fearful of losing another. I'm working on that. My faith has also changed. I have not lost it, but at times I feel I'm just hanging on by a thread. I still feel like I'm being guided and that I'm not alone. I still feel loved and cared for but I am wrestling with the Source and what that truly means to me. I know that was a long answer and a little vague. Like I said, I am still making sense of it all.

**Almost all of the songs refer to a "you," and some of them in a pretty personal and direct way. Is there a single "you" that the songs reference, or multiple specific "you's" or is it all more generic?**

They're all different "you's". In "Into Peace", the "you" is home, family and friends in San Diego. I wrote it with them and the way they opened their arms to our wounded lot in mind. In "What Would You Say" the "you" is my ego. In "Push" the "you" is sort of a guiding entity or even change itself. In "Balance" the "you" is my intuition, which I believe to be the voice of the creator or the holy spirit. The "you" in "Sweetness" is that very same voice. Did I leave any out?

**What is “The Big One?” And I have to ask, who is “Mama?”**

That's a good one. “The Big One” is my favorite song on the record for one. It's the one that haunts me the most. I started writing it about the fact that I tend to make quick decisions, sometimes big decisions, on the fly, and deal with the consequences later. Most decisions I make turn out all right but some don't. This song is about a particular decision or even an event that changes your life. At least that is the way I intended it when I first started to write it. However, it hits me deeper and breaks my heart when I hear it so there is more meaning in it for me than I am aware of at this time. It may just be the chord changes and the BGV's, which I love so dearly, and have MC Maggie B (Margaret Becker) to thank for that. She's a genius. It may be images I get of my family and the feeling of heartbreak. It may revolve around a bunch of moments for me, stirring up emotions. Whatever it is, I'm grateful for it.

“Hey Mama” is my second favorite! I wrote it at an all-girls, mostly all artist, “chick camp” weekend last year. We were given a topic when we got there on Friday and were asked to write a song, a poem or even a rap around that topic and we could perform it on Saturday night if we so desired. The topic was “Harvest”. I wrote it with all the women in my life in mind. Mama is my own mom, my sister, my best friends. I have been blessed with some incredibly strong women in my life who have guided me and given me my voice in so many ways. It's an homage to all those women. On Saturday night of Chick Camp I taught the women the “Hey Mama” line and had them harmonize it. Here we are, outside under the stars and I have about 60 girls singing this line over and over at me and I sang the melody over them. It was a magical moment for me. I had tears streaming down my face. It was a dream. When I recorded the song in the studio it was a similar experience. I got some of my dearest friends in the studio with me and had them sing the “Hey Mama Hey” part. They harmonized, clapped and even vamped at the end and we got it all. I tear up now EVERY TIME I hear it.

**There are a number of apparent contradictions or dichotomies in “What Would You Say,” from the second line in each verse (“I'm not completely convinced that it's true”) walking back the line right before it to the chorus itself (“Let it go, or hold on”). Can you talk about this?**

Like I said earlier, that song is a conversation I'm having with my ego. I was thinking a lot about the power of the ego and what would it be like if I could totally move through life without it. Could we survive without it? Isn't it necessary in some areas? Doesn't it drive us at times and doesn't it totally screw up everything at times? It's meant to be a playful take on those questions.

**What is it about the song “Push” that led to your choosing**

**it as the title of the record? In what ways is that song the “thesis statement,” if you will allow the professor in me to ask?**

Well Professor Ojo, that is a mighty fine question once again. There's a line in the song sung by the fabulous Joe Alexander that says, “Here comes the stinger....here comes the PUSH”. In that song the Push is that “guiding entity” that I mentioned earlier. I found that there were a lot of these moments in my life around writing for and leading up to making this record. It's a strong word and what it means to me is that I was guided, I pushed through it and I'm pushing forward.

**Why Nashville, and how did you assemble this crew? Did you rehearse ahead of time or mostly work things out in the studio? How long were you there, or did it involve multiple trips out for your home in San Diego?**

Oh I love this part of the story! My friend Tiffany called me on a Wednesday one day last year and said it would be so wonderful if I could fly to Nashville and surprise our dear friend Marie McGilvray for her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. I told her maybe if I could book my ticket a couple weeks in advance and had the dough, blah, blah, blah. She said, “Well, it's actually this Saturday.” I laughed and said no way would Dave be into it, but I told her to call him and try and butter him up. We're all great friends you see. I'm not sure what she said to him but he told me that if I could turn it into a song-writing trip then it would be worth trying to make it happen. Not that our lovely Marie wasn't enough, ha ha.

So I called a bunch of peeps to see if they wanted to write together. That's embarrassing for me. The people I called are kind of big cheeses and I was nervous to put myself out there. Well, the ones who bit were the biggest cheeses of all...Margaret Becker and Ric Cua for cryin' out loud! I had just met Ric and thought he was the nicest guy in the universe. So, I flew to Nashville, surprised lovely Marie and went to Maggie's and then Ric's. I was so nervous on my way to Maggie's, I was shaking like a flippin' Chihuahua. Maggie welcomed me into her home like I was her bff. She noticed I was nervous and put me right at ease. We proceeded to write a really nice song together, and in the process started talking about my being ready to make a record. A week later, I asked her if she would produce and she said yes! We started writing and plotting and as soon as we raised the dough the rest is history.

It made so much sense to choose Nashville as I feel at home there. I have my old band mates Jerry Roe and Robbie Cureton there, and some of my best friends live there. What better way to record the first record in years! The way we assembled our players just kind of fell into place. I wanted Jerry and Robbie for sure, if they were available, because we were once in a band together and they both are

amazing musicians. Maggie told me about Stephen Leiweke and Matt Stanfield and come to find out, they all had crossed each other's paths at one time or another in the studio and liked one another so it was perfect. The rest of the musicians that contributed are all friends and people we love. I could not imagine this record without any one of them.

When it came time to record, there was no rehearsing. Maggie and I had a lot of Skyping for writing and planning, and then two days of preproduction with Stephen and Matt before the rest of the band came in. We recorded the whole kit and caboodle in about 10 days with Maggie and Stephen laying down a few more tracks after I left. I was only there for those 10 days. A whirlwind of a trip.

**Amanda Palmer talks about her crowd-funding experience in very personal and vulnerable ways. Can you talk about what it was like for you to "put yourself out there" that way, to in a sense, as Amanda would say, not "get" people to support you but to "let" them do so? What was it like for you?**

I was against it at first because I didn't fully understand it. It was embarrassing to me to have to ask people for money. But seeing so many of our friends' bands do it and talk to them about the experience started to change my point of view a bit. That and the fact that I had already supported a bunch of crowd-funding projects; I did that because I believed in them and wanted to be a part of them, and that made me feel okay about doing my own. Once we got into, I was amazed at how it really does connect you to the people who believe in you. I was beyond surprised, grateful and completely humbled by the experience. I made new friends and am anxious to give them this music that they helped me make.

**Are you planning on performing these songs? How will you work that out logically with performers?**

UGH! I don't know. Yes, I mean YES! I want to do it all. Here's my plan: I want to find a programming / computer geek musician, an amazing bass player and a percussionist and go all over town and play my heart out. That's what I want. Check in with me in about 6 months to see how this is panning out.

**What's next musically?**

Well I'm continuing with my guitar lessons and have the writing bug, so I'm continuing with that as well. Pushing forward, singing these songs, making new ones and getting my hands dirty. That's what's next hopefully.



# GLOWER

**PULLING THE 90s INTO 2015, KICKING AND SCREAMING**



**For those who aren't familiar with your band, can you give us a run-down of the history?**

Well, the first seeds of Glower were planted in 2011 when my other band Hands was beginning work on our album for Facedown Records called *Give Me Rest*. I had been the drummer for that band, but decided to take a stab at writing some guitar parts. As it turned out, the stuff I was writing was much more melodic than the hardcore that Hands was known for and didn't work for that project. We also decided to stop touring at that time. I had always had a desire to do an alternative-rock project, so I decided to go for it now that I could devote myself fully. I started Glower and Shane (Ochsner, Hands vocalist) started *Everything in Slow Motion*.

I started sending files back and forth over the internet with my friend Ryan and he recruited Sean Murray, who is now the other half of Glower. After demoing out a couple of tracks that wound up on split 7" albums, we got to work on what became *The Circle Binds*.

**Your Facebook page references many bands that we are familiar with at DTL (The Choir, Michael Knott, The Violet Burning, etc). What is your connection with those bands? Did you grow up with them, discover them recently, etc?**

Man, I love those artists and have been into them for years now even though I missed them in their heyday. I grew up on the next generation of Christian alternative and hardcore when it had started to break out of the underground. in the late 90's early 00's. Stuff like Plankeye, Bleach, Further Seems Forever, Mewithoutyou, Hopesfall, etc.

I was obsessed with the scene to the point that my mom bought me this amazing book called *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music* by Mark Allen Powell. My favorite album of all time is The Violet Burning's 1996 self-titled record so I went through the entire thing looking for any band that had any connections or references to TVB.

I wound up getting into other bands of the era like The Prayer Chain and Starflyer 59. From there it was a small step to The Choir, The Seventy Sevens, Daniel Amos, King's X, Knott etc. And I just kept on that journey discovering great music. I'll never forget the day I got a copy of the 77's self-titled album for Island. Blew my mind. I actually have a "Do it for Love" tattoo. So yeah, the mid 80's to mid 90's Christian scene was very influential for me even though I wasn't there for it.

**So why go for a 90s influenced sound in 2015? Why not just go the Coldplay/Mumford route to super-stardom?**

First, I don't think there is any shot at "super-stardom" in

our future no matter what style of music we play! Sean and I just want to write music that we love and many of our influences come from a certain era. Outside of the Christian world we are both into bands like Smashing Pumpkins, Hum, Failure, Sunny Day Real Estate, Jawbreaker, Quicksand, etc. I also love more pop-oriented stuff like Third Eye Blind and Everclear. That was just such a great time for music.

Our stuff definitely has some serious 90's vibes, but I don't think it's stuck in the past. I for sure carried some of the hardcore sensibilities along with me from Hands. Weird time signatures and hard hitting riffs. Sean also brings his own flair to the mix helping to keep things current. He's a phenomenal musician with a great ear for melody and pays attention to detail. He adds so much to the songs I write and elevates them to a different level. He's also an amazing song-writer. That will come out more on the next record.

**How did you become signed to Broken Circle Records? Is there any type of scene that you are a part of that facilitated this, or are "scenes" dead where you live?**

I met Brent from Broken Circles years ago when Hands was playing Cornerstone. He had recently started the label and expressed an interest in releasing our *Sounds Of Earth* Album on vinyl. That never came to fruition, but I always kept him in the back of my mind. When Glower got rolling I approached him about releasing a split 7" for us and a band called ...Of Sinking Ships featuring a former member of Hopesfall. He was all about it and that kicked off our relationship.

After recording *The Circle Binds*, we shopped it around and actually had the interest of a significantly larger label. At the end of the day though, we just didn't feel comfortable with their offer and asked Brent if he wanted to release the album, which he did. My great experience working with Jason Dunn and the folks at Facedown led me to see the value in putting relationships first when partnering with a label. Even though Broken Circles is a smaller platform, it's a great fit for us. Brent is all about the art and has some very cool bands on his roster.

**Related to that, do you get to play live, and if so, what is a Glower show like?**

Crazy as this sounds, we have yet to play a show. We finally have a live band put together and are booking some gigs for the summer to help push the album. I have no idea what a Glower show looks like. Hopefully it's amazing. Or at the very least, I hope we don't totally suck! Either way, I'm looking forward to finding out.

**What does one do in North Dakota? Is music your full time thing, or are there other things to do there?**

Haha. I love North Dakota. There's this perception that we are a boring state. Not true. We have beautiful geography. Rolling plains, river valleys, the Badlands. We camp and hike, lots of outdoors stuff. The winters are long, but that's what Settlers of Catan is for!

Sean and I actually live in the capitol city, Bismarck. We both work and are married. Sean has a daughter and she keeps him plenty busy. My wife Rachel and I work with everyone else's kids. She's a social worker and I work with young people who have wound up on the wrong side of the law. So that takes up a lot of time. Never a dull day.

Music isn't full time anymore, but it's still a major endeavor. I hesitate to call it a "hobby" because we put so much time and effort into it. It's definitely a passion.

#### What is better: vinyl, CD, or mp3?

I'm pretty much strictly a vinyl and iPod guy at this point. I love being able to have a billion songs at my fingertips wherever and whenever. I am not a digital hater. That said, I have like 2,500 albums on vinyl. There is something special about the experience and aesthetic. I love being able to look at the full-size artwork on the sleeve and the sound of the needle in the groove. It's probably all in my head, but that's fine.

#### What is your opinion on the state of the music industry today?

You know, it's anyone's guess. Things have changed so much in the past decade. Album sales are abysmal even for huge bands. That's unfortunate because it dries up the revenue stream for bands to record albums and make a living off their art. I really do think folks who enjoy music should support the folks who create it. But, it is what it is. I've resolved myself to the idea of working in the "real world" to support my own art. Having said that, I hope everyone buys the record so I don't have to go broke to make the next one!

#### Discuss the new album a bit - what are your favorite moments on it and why?

This is a really special album for me. I don't know what everyone else will think. But, I really got to spread my wings as a songwriter on this outing. There's alternative, pop, rock and roll, subtle undertones of hardcore, an acoustic ballad... it's just a really diverse album. But I think it all fits together.

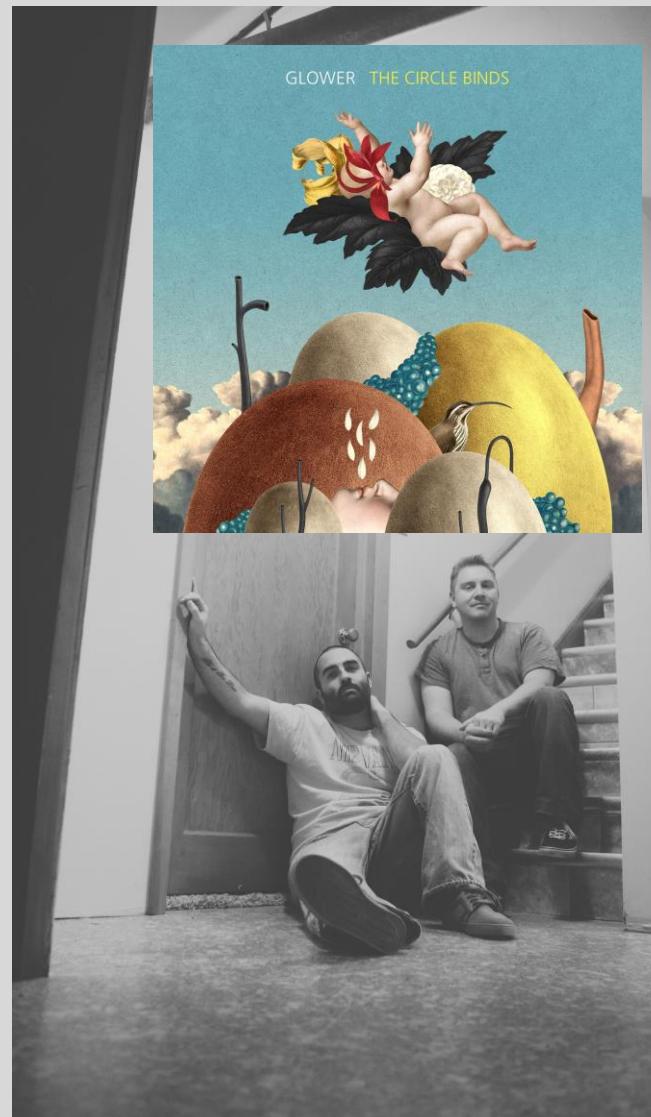
My favorite song is "Like Arrows." It has everything from complex riffing to big sugary vocal hooks to a ripping guitar solo. There's even a breakdown at the end. Somehow with all that packed in it doesn't feel disjointed. Then there is the big Beach Boys sounding choral part at the end of "Low

Motion." I had been listening to DA's *Horrendous Disc* quite a bit at the time. Haha. I also like the closing ballad which is the title song. I wrote it shortly after the passing of my grandfather, which I was present for. It was a very moving experience that got me thinking about beginnings and endings, how they tend to intertwine and mirror one another.

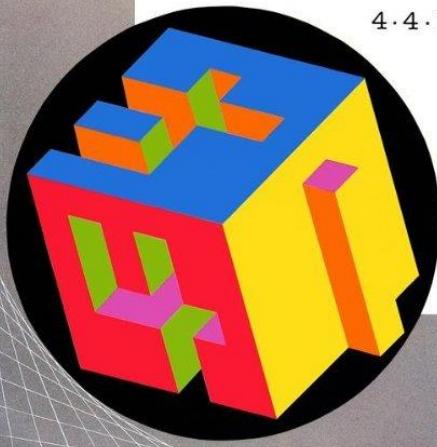
Finally I absolutely love the album artwork by Randy Mora. He is an artist from Colombia and he totally nailed it. Even if you hate the music, it's worth buying the record for the cover!

#### What do you think the future holds for Glower?

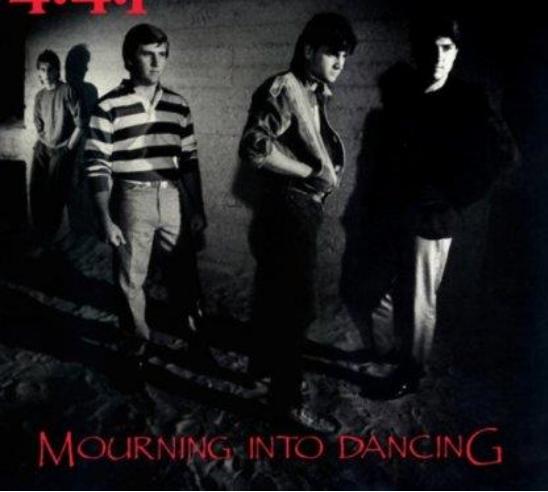
Well, the album comes out on June 23rd through Broken Circles. It will be available on vinyl (350 half baby blue/half highlighter yellow, 150 black) and digitally. You can get that at the Broken Circles website. As I mentioned earlier, we're getting ready to finally take this thing live, so that's very exciting. We're hoping to play some regional shows and possibly some festivals in the future. We're also already neck deep in writing for the next album which we plan on recording this fall/winter. It never stops!



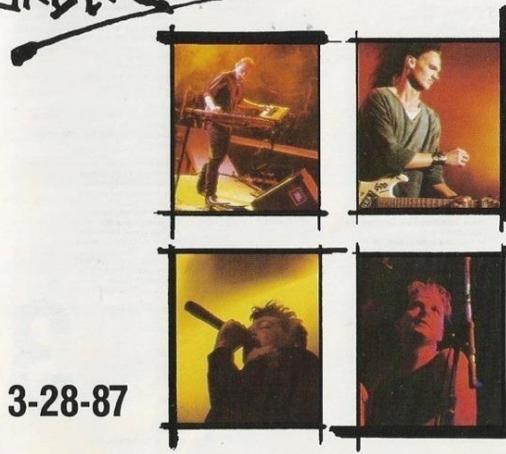
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UNDERCOVER



# HARRY BARNES (BLUE COLLAR RECORDS)

Harry L. Barnes is the former owner of Blue Collar Records, formerly Royal Commandment Records. I was particularly interested in Blue Collar records for their producing one of my favorite bands back in the day, 441. In talking to Harry, he gives some interesting insights into the production aspects of music from the era. I recommend reading the earlier Gordon Driver interview, as the two synthesize in interesting ways to tell a fuller story of this period of time in the Christian music industry.

**Kevin Noel Olson: Can you give us a bit of the history of Royal Commandment Records and who was on that label before it changed to Blue Collar?**

Harry L. Barnes: Back in '84, I attended concerts at Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa. I'd grown up and lived in Montebello at the time. It's a little community on the border of East Los Angeles. Cheech and Chong are from there. "Born in East L.A." is about that area.

We were driving out to Calvary Chapel each Saturday night in Costa Mesa where they were doing concerts, these were concerts were huge. They would do concerts and events every Saturday night.

I think the main chapel held somewhere around 2,000 people and they had an overflow area. I fell in love with the atmosphere and enjoying music I'd never heard as a Christian before growing up where I was at. There wasn't a lot of that going on out there.

We started taking a lot of friends to the concerts. I got to thinking about my old high school, Montebello High. 'what if we could do a concert here?'

I thought, 'I wonder what would happen if we brought a band out this way? To my hometown' I just saw the impact and how much people responded to the message and the music. And how it was relatable to a lot of young folks.

There was a gentleman named Coach David Meshegan(?) Don't ask me how to spell his last name. He was a super-nice guy and just a wonderful person. I talked to him about I thought we could do.

Surprisingly, the high school at that time they were open to it. They didn't have any objection to it even though it was a Christian band that was going to be playing. They let us do a little assembly

on campus at lunchtime the day of the concert. So, we were really promoting the concert, we sold tickets. Coach Meshgan ran an group on campus called The Fellowship of Christian athletes. Through that organization we were given a connection to the school. We did this concert which Calvary Chapel helped support financially, and we got Darryl Mansfield to come out and play. He did a great show. He had a song about evolution where he put a monkey-mask on and whatnot. He had a guitar player who was great. The students loved it! Montebello High School at that time was about 2,000 kids. The concert later that night was well attended filling the school auditorium with about 800 that evening, and it was absolutely phenomenal. At the end of the concert, Randy Sigler who was doing the message at the concerts in Calvary Chapel on Saturday nights, he gave a message. When he gave an altar call, 600 kids went forward.

After we did that concert I was talking to Randy about what I wanted to do. You know maybe try a small label that would allow me to do more concerts. He'd got a lot of demo tapes and he and I went through a whole bunch of tapes that he had, and there was a band called 441. I liked the sound of it. I liked what they were doing musically. They were guys that were relatively local to where I was. We were all based in the San Gabriel valley area, so we were close by. I met with the guys, and decided to do a little record with them. It was interesting. We didn't have a lot of expectations. We didn't have anything. We didn't know what would happen.

So, we do the record and took it to a radio station. It was the biggest radio station, as far as contemporary Christian music goes, in the country, called KYMS. They were based out of Orange County, and there were so many large mega-churches in the county at the time. Their audience was quite large. They had a Saturday night radio countdown, and the release of our record, 441, came out and we listened wondering, 'are we going to make it?' into the, I think it was a top twenty or top 40 list. I think it was top 40 for Christian music albums sold in southern California. We were waiting and hoping, you know, that we would fall in there somewhere. We had a pretty successful debut, so we thought with the initial record release we could maybe make the top 40. And it counts down and we do not hear us, so it comes to the last spot, we thought we missed the top 40 and the host comes on, 'Hey, this band with new a record here from southern California. 441 - its #1!'

It's kind of makes me teary eyed thinking about it right now because it was such a high! We never expected that. It blew us all away; the guys in the band, myself. We hear that being played on the radio. Let me tell you, it was the first time it had ever happened in the history of their countdown that a debut album debuted at #1. And the funny thing is that we knocked out U2 with Unforgettable Fire, I believe, was the one that we knocked off.

We held that spot for a while. The amazing thing was that record stayed in their top 40 countdown for an entire year. We were all just completely blown was very exciting.

After that, we started up some national distribution deals with Lexicon music, owned by a gentleman named Ralph Carmichael. He was a super-nice man and a very talented composer and orchestra leader. He was a phenomenal musician and very successful in what he did in the music world in general, I know he was a Grammy winner and maybe even an Oscar.

That lead us to do a follow-up record with [441] called *Mourning Into Dancing*, which we stepped up the production on. We were able to go to a nicer studio called Pachyderm Studios which were owned by the Elephante brothers, Dino and John. At that time, John had become the lead singer of Kansas, taking Kerry Livgren's place. So, we recorded at their studio. After that, I met Gene Eugene. He was the leader of a band called Adam Again, and we went to Derri Daughtery of the Choir studio and recorded *In A New World of Time*. Which was a very "new" or unique sound for Christian music. That was our second record. Gene then introduced me to Joe Taylor of Undercover.

Undercover at that time was going through a lot of personal changes. I think personally they were battling with different issues in their lives. After some discussions with Joe and the band we decided to work together. We went back to Pachyderm and we recorded *Branded*. *Branded* was a really interesting record to do with Joe and Undercover. First for me being a start-up label to work with Undercover who was at that time a pretty big band in Christian music. There was no one doing what they were doing. They always drew huge crowds and had a huge following. They had some really big, successful records. But there was something going on and they decided to make a change with their label, and we put *Branded* together.

*Branded*, I think, was a controversial record because the record wasn't as...I don't know if this is the right term to use, but it wasn't as much a 'rah-rah' record in Christian music. It had a lot of dark elements and emotions to it, and it talked about a lot of struggles. It just wasn't what people were used to hearing from Undercover. I think at the time with Christian artists in general. I think it was a more emotionally honest record that dealt with struggle and vulnerability that we all go through.

**I was pretty impressed with the *Branded* album. I've always appreciated records that make you think. 441, with "Fish On Her Car," made me think a bit farther than things you might typically hear at the time.**

Exactly. Now, it's interesting that you mention that. Because 441 they were always looked at as, for lack of a better word, a 'goody two-shoes' band. They all came from good homes in a very affluent neighborhood in San Gabriel valley. Most of the guys had grown up and lived near Arcadia, which is again just a well-to-do area.

Some of the guys from the other groups had a rough-edge to them. Undercover certainly had a rough edge. Bands like the Altar Boys had a rough edge. Gene was just a character himself. He was a very unique individual. He definitely came from a different part of town with different sort of environment.

But 441 actually, when you listen to a lot of their lyrics, if you look beneath the surface you'll find out there's a little bit more to them than just "Break Out, Break Free" which was a great little song they did. It had a great hook, a great drum intro - it was just a little rockabilly tune that they did that really launched everything. But "Fish On Her Car" was really, without any malicious intention, it was really mocking what was going on in the Orange County Christian mentality. You know, where everyone had a fish on their car and were doing all the things that made you look like a Christian. It wasn't like you lived like one or had genuine changes in your life.

So yes, they were not quite as simplistic as people may think. But *Branded* was on a whole different level in terms of emotional struggle and depth. It was definitely a different type of record.

**I think of 441 as having some real substance beneath the surface. "Break Out" is, to me, a bit like Alice Cooper's "18." They are trying to move out into a larger world than they knew before.**

The other song on the 441 record that they wanted to redo on the follow-up record was "In His Presence." It was actually a great song and a great tune that they did. So I think those guys were definitely solid. There were a number of songs that were really well done and still hold up to this day.

**Moving into *Mourning Into Dancing*, I feel is a lot more in-depth and considered than even their debut album.**

Yes. As you grow as a person and start to see things differently. As you're travelling to different churches across the country, you're exposed to different things. Some of it was good and some of it not so good. It can be an eye-opening experience, if you would. There was a lot going on in Christian music at that time, and you came across people who weren't as sincere as you would think or hope they would be. I think *Mourning Into Dancing* was a reflection of that.

"*Mourning Into Dancing*," I love the song. It's a great tune. It's a great message for any Christian, you know. But then again, think about something too. You look at the song, "*Mourning Into Dancing*," it's not talking about an easier, happier life. I think that was the message that 441 picked up on. People were getting tired of, not their faith, but that it's okay to acknowledge their struggles sometimes. You don't always have to put on that smiling face as a Christian and be this person whose life is always perfect. That's not reality. That's why it's a great song, because it deals with that. It doesn't have the dark overtone that maybe the *Branded* album did, but that song could have been done on *Branded* as an example. With of course Undercover's spin and take on it. It's kind of along the same line.

In doing this, you start getting letters from kids across the country, and people actually outside of the country from people in Europe and other areas of the world. You have to wonder how are people hearing this? How are people finding this music? How are they getting a hold of it? We had no idea. Some of the letters are so inspiring, especially when you struggle. We were having problems with our distributor. I think he may have been also distributing for Gordon Driver [owner - Exile Records]. He did The Choir on Lexicon. I think he was struggling with the same scenario as far as distribution and getting paid for the albums we were selling.

Not to change the subject, but a very interesting thing was that Steve Hindalong of The Choir, he and I basically grew up together. We only lived a few blocks apart and we went to the same high school. I worked in an audio/video store where Steve would come on a regular basis and we'd play tapes for each other and share music after work. Both he and I were huge fans of *The Scarecrow* album by John Mellencamp - really for the production value of the record. Steve, as a drummer, loved the drums sound. So did I. The sound they got was very simplistic, but it's so solid. It's just interesting that the little area of Montebello there, that he and I grew up together. Of course, he's gone on to do so many great things and found success.

**That's very cool! So, what was the evolution for the latter era of Blue Collar?**

Blue Collar had a lot of success in moving product. After 441, we went ahead and did an album with Gene of Adam Again. Gene was accused of sounding like The Talking Heads, which was a huge influence on him. So, if it sounds a little bit like it, there's a reason. Gene may have taken it step to far with getting the Minister and Artist Howard Finster who was from the south - he painted with tractor paint - and did this amazing album cover for the Talking Heads (I think it won a Grammy). Anyway if it was too much I did not care. I loved it, it was such a great cover. Gene was on the road as a manager I think for Undercover and they were down south he winds up driving out to this farm and ends up meeting this guy the Minister Howard Finster, Howard took a liking to Gene and ends up doing the album cover for *In A New World Of Time*.

He did it on plywood. I remember having it in my office, this big 2x2 piece of plywood just this great piece of Art. I'm sure he had a large cult following, because he's so unique in what he was doing. I really loved the sound quality of that record. My biggest regret was that I didn't take a bit more active role in the studio. I contributed and made suggestions, and offered direction and input. There are things that I listened to at the time, and listening to it today they still bother me. I think it would've been easy to make it better. I was trying to balance things out and not interject as much, though it was probably my right to do so.

**Can you offer us a list of the bands you worked with during the Blue Collar/Royal Commandment era?**

We put out four albums. 441, their debut album, followed by *Mourning Into Dancing*, then *A New World Of Time* with Adam Again, and then Undercover - *Branded*. We also recorded a live album of Undercover that I was a part of, but we actually did a transfer of ownership to another gentleman - I don't know what happened to him - but he was out of New Jersey. He had been calling me, wanting to get involved. So he assisted them with finishing up. That was recorded live at Magic Mountain at Six Flags Park in southern California. It was a live album we did, but ultimately didn't release as a Blue Collar album.

**441 did a third album sometime later.**

They did a third album; I think it was through Brainstorm, self-produced, I'm not sure. I wasn't involved at the time, but it was the two primary writers actually I think they wrote all of 441 music Glen Holland and John McNamara. They did something on their own. The Giali brothers, Steve and John, I don't think were involved with the record. They are all such a great group of guys.

I wanted to go back to the Undercover record, because there's three things I think are important about the record, that are really meaningful to me to this day.

The first was that Joe had shared with me. At the time there was Sparrow records, that was a huge label in Christian music. They had some really talented artists. A guy like John Talbot, Steve Taylor - there was a lot of folks. The head of the label, the president of the label actually called Joe, and let him know he had made everybody on his staff listen to *Branded* because he thought it was such a powerful record. That was meaningful to me to think we could do something like that. It was nice to hear, you know?

But more importantly than that, as I mentioned before we got letters from all over the world. We got a letter from a girl who was in Texas, and it was from her hospital room where she was undergoing treatment. She said the *Branded* album helped prevent her from committing suicide. Hearing that just blows you away it just reminds you it's okay to acknowledge your struggles and doubts it's okay to be honest. And even though we were struggling with the business side of things what we were really after was still happening.

So, when we're talking about money issues and royalties not being paid, I mean I'm talking six-figures that I was out, and then of course I can't help the artist get paid because I'm not getting paid. It was kind of a trickle-down effect. But when you get letter like that from someone who said it help them from suicide, it humbles but inspires you for sure, I never forgot that one because it was so impactful, it reminded me in the end all the struggles are definitely worth it. Because that was the ultimate goal to begin with.

At the end of the day, all you can do is try to be accountable for what you can control and what you can do. If it's the right thing and a genuine direction. Looking back on it, even this day, you forget about not getting paid. You forget about the struggles. You remember them, but ultimately you remember the letter from the girl in the hospital room. From people around the world who somehow found this music and it mattered to them it had an impact it helped make a difference in their life, it was a privilege to be a part of it. It's just things like that. That's really what you want to focus on, because that was the ultimate goal anyway. That's the memory, the part always rises to the top. And the times shared with all of the guys in the studios and on the road.

A few years later Joe was interviewed for a publication that named *Branded* as one the top 50 or most important Christian records of all time, it was a pretty respectable publication. He mentioned me in the interview which was very kind and generous of him, it meant a lot to me. That was something to look back and be happy and proud to be a part of. As a Christian, you want to be careful to not be caught up with yourself. You are thankful that you are able to be a part of something. I think thankful is the proper word. You are thankful and appreciative to be part of this.

Returning to Gene Eugene who had a large impact, it's important to touch on his story a bit. He was a child actor and had some pretty big success. Gene was in an episode of *Bewitched*, which really was probably one of the most famous episodes of that iconic series in the 60s. Gene played Darrin in one episode when Andora turned him into a little boy. The little boy was played by Gene.

The thing that Gene loved more than music was baseball and horse-racing. He was a horse-racing junkie. If he could go to Las Vegas and spend an entire week betting on horses, that's what he would do.

But he had a battle with money, and Gene had a lot of demons. Unfortunately, some of those demons were what may have lead to his early death. One day Gene comes to me and says, 'Hey Harry, I really need some money - is there anything you can do?' And I said, 'I really can't. I'm not going to have any money for you until Friday.' This was like on a Tuesday. So I said, 'On Friday I can see about helping you out, but I can't do anything for you today.' He said, 'Man, I'm desperate! Can't you help me?' and then he goes, 'Okay, so you can help me Friday.' I said, 'Sure, I'll help you

on Friday.' He said, 'Okay.' How about if you give me a check now, and I won't cash it 'til Friday. Will that work?' And I said to Gene, 'You have to PROMISE that you will not cash this check until Friday.' He said, 'Harry, you don't have to worry about it. Friday is the day I'll cash it.' I said, 'Okay Gene.'

So I cut him a check. He takes off. Shortly thereafter, I head to the bank. I get to the bank and who is in the line in front of me but Gene cashing the check? \*chuckles\*

All the musicians loved Gene, he was a character and a great talent. The difference between Gene and all the other guys from that era is that his musical influences were far different. He covered one of Marvin Gaye's big songs. His influences were far different than most of the Christian bands at that time. He was a very sharp guy, very, very bright, who was just like a lot of people who are that way. They have a lot of struggles. I think that's pretty much where Gene was at. It was a great experience working with Gene, and I think that album if you listen to it, there was really nothing like it in Christian music at that time. There was nothing sounding like what they were doing. It was very unique and very different. Gene definitely had a huge influence on Christian music. You can start hearing the roots of it in that first record.

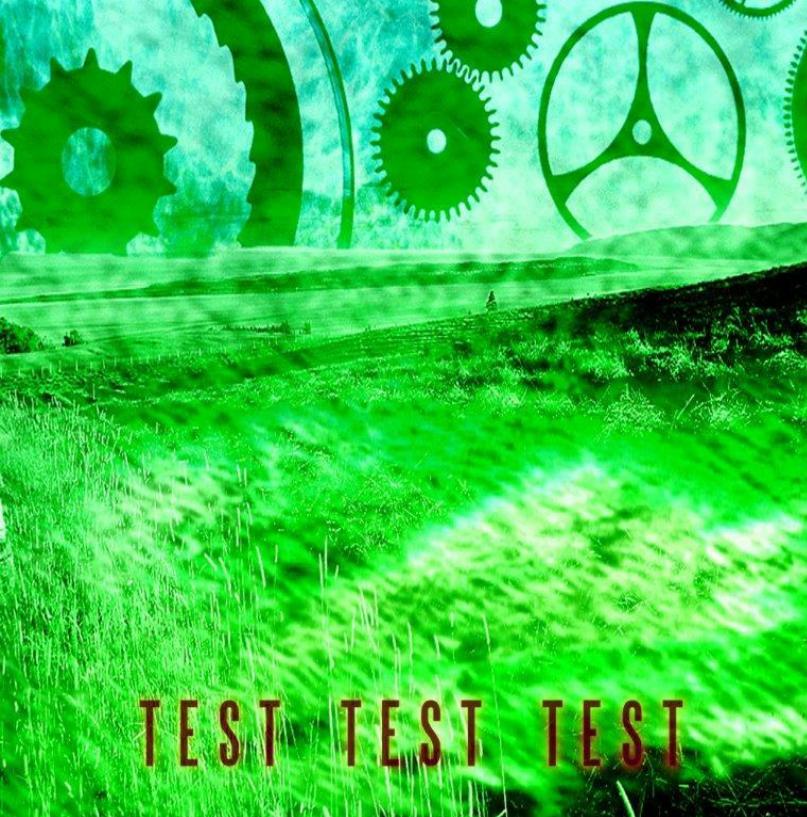
I was happy and grateful to be a part of working with bands like 441 and producing their first album in the studio along with Gene and Adam Again. Of course, having the opportunity to work with Undercover really was a privilege. At that time, the record was unique. I'm thankful for what it turned out to be and it was a great experience overall. Like I said earlier, you focus on the long-term things where you helped people in some way, and that was the goal all along.

So, going back to where it all started from, going to concerts, like the high school concert in Montebello, you never would have thought you'd be able to help people like that. That was always the goal. That is what it was all about. So, in the end, there was real success to it. I think whether it be Christian music or music in general, people in the entertainment field in general, the commercial success seems to be the driving force for many. The raw passion for the art and the work sometimes is not there.

I'm a huge fan of Willie Nelsen, Kris Kristofferson, Johnny Cash Gordon Lightfoot - writers who had a huge passion for what they're doing. I'm actually getting ready to go back into the studio again to help my cousin. He's a country artist out of Nashville. We're going to put together some things and I'm going to help produce it, try to help put it together and try to get him a deal through it. So, I'm throwing my hat in the ring one more time to help my cousin out. I think he's got a real shot, and hopefully we can make it work.

**Thanks, Harry. I think it's been a great and interesting interview. What are your future plans?**

I just want to strive to live a life of genuineness with empathy and love for others and to take the time to laugh each day.



## ***Interview with DW Dunphy by Mike Indest 8.13.15***

I'm not sure when or where I first became aware of DW Dunphy and his awesome music. It might have been in the Dambed (The Daniel Amos Message Board) many years ago. That seems like the most plausible scenario since that is where I came across most of the artists who have been featured on the *Basement Tapes*. I may not remember exactly when I first heard DW but I do know I was blown away and to be honest, a bit jealous. He has consistently put out some great records and I think we are overdue getting to know him better.

**DW, you have quite a discography available on BandCamp. How many records do you have available and how long have you been recording?**

There are 12 or 13 floating around out there, but in total I have probably recorded 15, and I have been a part of some duos and group efforts. Some of the first stuff came out as part of an indie cassette collective under the Secret Decoder Records label.

I have been doing this since the mid-1990s, and I started with a relatively crude recording setup. Two boomboxes. I'd record on one, play back, sing and play along as I recorded on the other, and on and on until I built up a rather fuzzy-sounding version of multitracking. It was a pretty neat trick at the time, and thankfully the technology has become more affordable and better since then.

Your latest *Test, Test, Test* so far is an instrumental and is being released one song at a time. Tell us about this new project and why are you releasing this one song at a time?

*Test Test Test* is showing up this way really out of necessity. First of all, time is a huge factor. As we move from year to year, the time we can allot to making music gets smaller and smaller. Responsibilities, time lost in commuting, even just making yourself dinner and answering phone calls can swallow up your evenings. My ability to park myself in front of the PC and just do it has been constrained.

This is usually the point at which the individual -- especially the individual who is more involved in this as a hobbyist than as a career -- tends to quit. Life intervenes. Yet I enjoy it too much to just give up.

Then there is the other side of things that, because of the need of the Internet world to constantly produce, produce, produce material, or else you get forgotten about, making the album and putting it out as I go along works with both these constraints.

As a medium, I love the album format. I love the package, how the songs work together or contrast each other. There's nothing wrong with a great single, but I'm fascinated by albums that hang together as a fully realized piece of work. *Test Test Test* will be a full album, probably ten or eleven tracks long, but it's arriving in piecemeal form.

**Your new instrumental tracks seem to blend progressive rock and smart pop, a trait the rest of your output also has. Who are your musical influences?**

That's hard to say. I am a voracious consumer of music. I really enjoy progressive rock, and that goes back to the conceptual aspects of the album. But I also like what we would consider "classic" pop. So in there you have your British Invasion bands, The Beach Boys, Motown and Stax on the soul side...I've been listening to some of the reissues from the band The Knack, which falls into the power pop category.

One of my favorite bands ever is Daniel Amos, and I think my fragmented sense of what a rock album can or should be is informed by those records. My first rodeo was with the *Doppelganger* album, which was so weird the first time I heard it, but was so magnetic that I couldn't back away from it.

At the same time, I am really into movie music. I'm particularly a fan of John Williams, Jerry Goldsmith, those big orchestral scores and the classical pieces that helped inform them. So I draw from a lot of different places, and it all gets distilled into a specific thing that I do. That's always the most difficult question to answer when people ask, "Who do you sound like?" I don't think most creative people have a good answer to that, no matter what you do. It has been a hindrance to being able to move this thing forward in some ways. It's much easier to say, "I sound like The 77s" and then you can have all the 77s fans try out your music. That band is also an influence on me, but I doubt that people automatically would make that association while hearing me.

It's good and bad. Good because I can say I'm unique, but bad because unique is really hard to market.

**Besides putting out your own music, you write for Popdose and host a radio show. You obviously are a big music fan. Is anything in today's world of music exciting you?**

There's a lot of exciting stuff out there. I was a big fan of the most recent Steven Wilson album that came out last year called *Hand.Cannot.Erase*. A band that is brilliant and criminally overlooked from Dublin called Pugwash is coming out with a new one called *Play This Intimately (As If Among Friends)*. A friend of mine, Brandon Schott, just concluded a successful KickStarter campaign for his new album *Crayons & Angels*. A group called The Deafening Colors just released *Carousel Season* through BandCamp. Then you have all the other artists in the Down The Line Collective who keep putting out inventive stuff, and are frequently working on the same non-existent budgets as I am. That's always inspiring. One day I'd like to be able to meet them all in

public in one place. I think the universe might collapse into dark matter if it happened though, with such a concentrated mass of nerding out in one place.

**You've embraced digital distribution which is very cost effective and also worldwide. Do you think this is a viable method or just a flooded market?**

That is the question of our times, isn't it? The Internet has democratized music creation and distribution, but it has also subdivided into two separate "Internets." Think about it: what was once released in a week, or a month quantity-wise is released in an hour now. The Internet promised it was a very big pool so everyone, come on and jump in. So we did, but we find that it isn't as big as we thought and have to go to some extremes to stand out. If you don't have something really flashy and really controversial to differentiate yourself with, you can easily find yourself canceled out. That's one Internet.

The other is the Internet where the stars who had all the power before have just as much, if not more, and are under the same needs to gain the attention. They have much more money and influence to do that. The Internet didn't kill the record labels, it just turned them more into a multimedia consortium. In all this you can understand why every so often Kanye West will say something outrageous or controversial, or why so much attention is paid to what celebrity Taylor Swift's latest song is about. That drama keeps you current in the news feed, and that keeps you "alive."

I heard a story about a famous musician -- not a huge celebrity musician, but well-respected and a consistent earner -- who took two years to write and record an album. When the album came out he had to defend himself from the label that it was a comeback. He would say that he never left, but because he didn't have this ginned-up media cycle behind him during his supposed downtime, the public presumed he had quit. So when people see this celebrity or that celebrity appearing out of nowhere, doing something shocking or saying something scandalous, take it for what it is. It is likely an attempt to remind the audience of your existence.

With those big sharks at the top sucking so much of the oxygen out of the water, you can imagine the difficulties for the others -- the other Internet -- down at the bottom of the tank.

I'm reminded of a recent KickStarter campaign for a new Mike Knott EP and a live show, and I'm grateful that the campaign was successful, but if I recall correctly it wasn't a barn-burner. That Knott and the Lifesavers need to do a KickStarter at all shows how hard it is right now. The same can be said of Bill Mallonee, whether it is an older Vigilantes

of Love offering or a WPA disc or a solo thing. He's selling his guitars to keep it going, and to think about what he's done over the years, that's stunning and kind of heartbreaking too. It can make people jaded and cynical to think about the promise of what technology can do, and how limiting it still can be. You can reach the world with your music, but unless you set your hair on fire and dance the Electric Slide as you're putting the fire out, you're visibility can be extremely limited.

I don't want to sound like an old crank about this, because I'm not. I'm genuinely thankful I can do what I do at all, and that's really all thanks to technology and the Internet. We are coming to terms with what is afforded to us and gradually lowering our expectations to be more realistic. I think everyone goes into this believing they too can be a big shark. Those who are really devoted to the craft of making music continue to do so long after they've made that adjustment and settled in.

Would I like a horde of screaming fans chanting my name and asking for my autograph? Sure, why not? The key is staying true to my creative expression even without the ego gratification.

**Tell us how people can find you and what is your next move?**

Next move is continuing work on *Test Test Test* as well as a track for a Christmas song compilation. This song is called "Neon Green Xmas" and it touches on both the way the holiday is changing as we continue to age, and that melancholy that settles over us because we have to be grown-ups. When you're a kid, it is all whipped cream and lights and this wave of euphoria. When you're older, you have to recognize the meaning behind things and their costs, both spiritually and financially in the literal sense. Clearly, my track will not be the holly-jolliest on the album.

I also worked on an EP earlier in the year with some guy named Indest. I've been sending it around to as many people as I know might accept it. Everyone says my ukulele playing on it is awesome, but that's the instrument I *didn't* play on the thing. Cue the sad trombone music.

As for getting to me, I relaunched [dwdunphy.net](http://dwdunphy.net) and everything I do tends to park in that parking lot. There's also the BandCamp page ([dwdunphy.bandcamp.com](http://dwdunphy.bandcamp.com)), the Noisetrade page ([noisetrade.com/dwdunphy](http://noisetrade.com/dwdunphy)), the CD Baby page ([cdbaby.com/Artist/DwDunphy](http://cdbaby.com/Artist/DwDunphy)) and of course the Down The Line Collective BandCamp page ([downthelinecollective.bandcamp.com](http://downthelinecollective.bandcamp.com)). Therefore, if anyone says they couldn't find me, *that's their problem*.



# STAINED GLASS RAINBOWS

Commentary by Steve Ruff

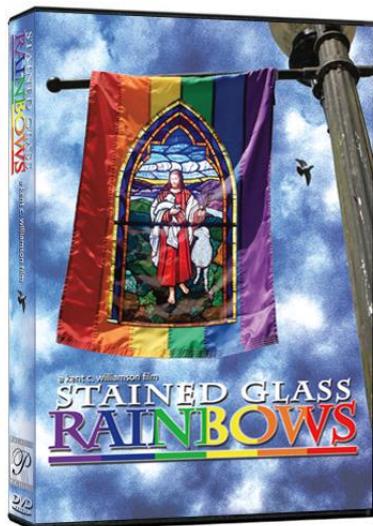
The 'issue' of homosexuality in the church seems to be defined by 'left vs. right' ideas and ideals. The focus on sin, what is isn't sin, etc. is tiring and mind numbing. Let's shift the focus for a bit shall we? Why don't 'we' as the 'church' focus on the more important issues of where the 'church' has allowed predators and pedophiles, even covered up the acts of sexual violence to minors, and yet 'we' fill 'their' pews every Sunday. There is no denomination or faction of the evangelical church that hasn't been hit with leaders exposed in a multitude of egregious acts of the sexual nature. Still, every Sunday, 'we' fill their seats and pay 'tithe' to the very system that engages in the very thing that they demonize others for doing. Why are 'we' as 'the church' less concerned about the well-being of others without it fitting into some nice tidy little package of religion that doesn't help, heal or convict. The system itself is a sham, it is a shame that the discussion even has to be had.

People are people... 'we' as Christians are more concerned with other people's morals than we are with our own, or the 'leaders' we look to for guidance. We ran an issue at DTL some time back, and we shared the story of 3 people from the music scene and their very different and unique stories. It literally hurts my brain to see these guys always challenged via social media or interviews. Why do Christians feel so compelled to make everyone see it their way? I think folks latch onto religion or spirituality because they find hope, belief and goodwill in the belief system they embrace. I don't recall Jesus ever trying to change people via their faults, their sins or their hidden secrets. Who gets to define sin anyway? Which fracture of the church and their interpretation are we to embrace? What version of the scriptures are we to read to determine morality? Which original text translation are we to consider? What was and wasn't socially relevant to the time period and geographic location of the scriptures we should live by?

The whole idea of 'Christianity' is built upon a foundation of believing in what cannot be seen. There is not one christian that can even understand the holy trinity or the virgin birth...so why are we so sure when it comes to our beliefs in how someone else lives their life? Why don't we focus more on living our life, on becoming a better person and taking care of our neighbors and friends? No person should be defined by their sexual orientation. Maybe it's sin for it to even be an

issue? It doesn't matter if 'they choose' to be gay or if they are born that way...doesn't matter. They are who they are regardless of how they ended up there, just as we all are. My belief is 'they' are 'us', and 'we' are 'them'. I've never heard a heterosexual have to defend being born straight, so why should homosexuals have to defend themselves? My feelings are that the 'church' is comfortable highlighting their own bitterness and hatred under a thin cloak of 'doing God's will'. The 'church' in America has become a political excuse to validate our own hatred of others and how they live their life. We impose on those we don't understand, and we whine and gripe about it. The 'church' itself is a problem....maybe even the problem.

The longer I live I am aware of how much I am not sure about. I hope that maybe it is a process of unlearning what has been programmed into our brains from a young age, or it is maybe an experienced and cautious approach to things that comes from years of trial and error. I don't know...but I believe to the core of my being, that if our 'religions' and beliefs infringe and hurt others, we have stepped outside of the very biblical approach of 'loving others as ourselves'.



I understand the intent of *Stained Glass Rainbows*, and the desire to bring in communication... but I also feel the vague sneaking suspicion that I feel about most Christian narratives in regards to homosexuality: that is that the film never comes down on 'right' or 'wrong' because if pressed I have yet to hear any believer condone homosexuality. I see people trying to be more 'accepting' or more 'tolerant', but I want to really see someone challenge the notion that homosexuality is sin. I think as well that it is high time to acknowledge the suffering that the church has inflicted on the homosexual community. These artists that have come out and

exposed themselves in front of us are to be applauded, and I think that Jesus would feel the same way, or I certainly hope that He would. Being real with who you are and who your Creator made you to be seems like the most honest path to take on our journey. The gift of life that humanity has been offered was never conditional, it is free to all regardless of race, color, gender or sexual orientation.

Seriously, Christendom can't agree on which Bible is to be trusted, the 'church' can't come to a consensus on which texts are really a part of holy scripture, yet the church is so sure about how someone else should live their life and they are so sure they know how God really feels about the subject of homosexuality? I spend enough time trying to live my own life, I don't have anything to say about how someone else lives theirs. I guess we should look to what Christ said about this issue shouldn't we? Yeah, He never mentioned it, maybe it's not as important as people make it out to be?



## STEVE'S CORNER

### What Down the Line is and isn't... a letter to nobody and everybody.

Down the Line started years ago, Matt and I had a vision that is coming to fruition with each and every issue we put out. What was the vision, you ask? Check out our zine to get it:) What we are is simple: we are a collective of people who put out a free zine, we do stories/articles/interviews solely out of our love for the music, and we hope that in some small way we can spread the word about new independent artists as well as the "established guard" that comprises the mix of music and interviews that we cover. That means that out of the 6-8 contributors for each issue, we make time in our personal lives to put out a lot of hard work and effort into doing stories that interest us, and hopefully interest you (the reader) as well. The Zine itself encompasses hours of work in not only the articles, but also the reviews and the technical aspect of the layout, etc.

I'm stoked that the Zine is growing, I regret that usually I am the hold up to an issue getting out because I am perpetually late with everything. I'm excited that we have some unique perspectives and musical tastes that vary with each contributor, and with that being said...

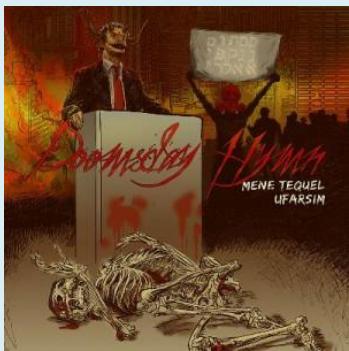
We cover music and artists and stories, what we have never done and will never do is cover artists personal life unless it directly relates to the music. We don't go around dishing dirt on people we cover because we are interested in the music, not on personal shortcomings of the artist represented. Every artist represented in our zine is human just like everyone else. If we choose not to cover someone based on their 'past', their 'sins' and their 'shortcomings', we would quickly run out of bands to cover. Again, we are interested in the music, not the limitations of who we 'can/can't' cover because of their past, regardless of how vile it may be.

Consider this as well, just because we do a story does not mean that we know the ins and outs of the people involved. I know that I don't generally have a back story on individual people and their personal lives, I only know about the music or the art they have created. I honestly do not keep up with many things in "Christendom" (or in the CCM world), I do keep up with the music that we cover, and the artist as it relates to the music. Sometimes you do an article and find out later that the person covered is not a nice person - that happens - but to pull out because of that seems disingenuous to me.

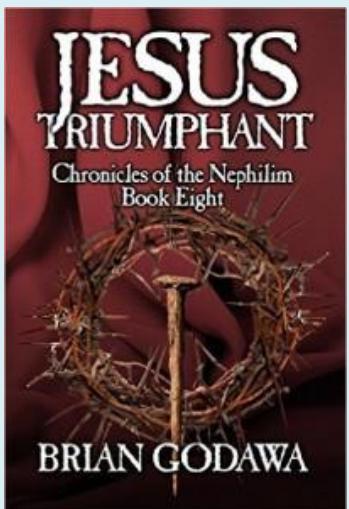
We've been accused of all sorts of stuff in the few years we've been doing this, and most recently accused of endorsing a criminal in one of our stories. My feeling about that is that if anyone looked at my personal past, I might be considered a criminal as well. So would many of the good people we've done stories on in the zine. Considering what Jesus said to the criminal next to him goes a good measure in my mind, and Paul (who gets quoted more than Jesus) called himself 'chief' among sinners. People do crappy things, it's human nature... does it mean that we shouldn't discuss something positive they have done as well? How many people quit listening to The Who after Pete Townsend's child pornography charges? If we did an article or a review of The Who's albums, would we be endorsing child pornography as well? How many people quit listening to Phil Spector albums after he was found guilty of murder and Lord knows what else? If I talk about how great someone's music is when they are known to have glaringly obvious character and ethical defects, am I endorsing the music or the music and everything that individual has been involved in? What if the person was convicted and time/punishment served, does that matter? I'm asking the question because I genuinely want to know.

Why does any of this matter??? It matters because it covers a range of issues when writing in a 'Christian' Zine. Readers, and people who don't read us, look at stories from a broad perspective. In the 'Christian' community these stories also get filtered through every readers individual bias on what is morally or ethically correct, it gets filtered through the lens of what is or isn't 'sin'. It gets held to a different standard because it gets judged through each person's religious belief as it pertains to right and wrong. It's impossible to please everyone all the time, take comfort that we're not trying to please anyone ever; we're doing what we do because we want to shine a light on some really great art, it would be nice to start a discussion on social issues as they relate to us all as well, but for now we cover music.

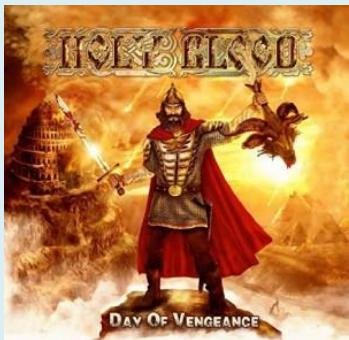
Thanks for reading the Zine to those that actually take the time to digest and flip through what's in between the pages. There is no shortage of good music coming that we will cover, and feel free to email or message us at any of the copious amounts of social media where you find us, let us know what you like, don't like, or what you want to see covered more or even covered less...we're all in this together, right?



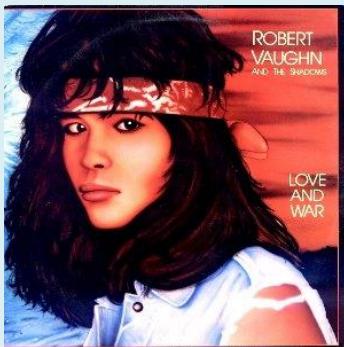
**Doomsday Hymn | *Mene Tequel Ufarsim* | 2015 Rottweiler Records | [rottweilerrecords.bigcartel.com](http://rottweilerrecords.bigcartel.com) |** Back in the day, long before Slayer existed as band, Belshazzar was seated on the throne in the palace in Babylon, holding a big feast. While partying it up, sacred vessels were taken from the Jerusalem Temple. They drank wine from these vessels while praising the Babylonian gods, thus profaning Yahweh. A disembodied hand appears and writes "Mene Tequel Ufarsim," the name of the new Doomsday Hymn album, on the wall of the palace. After several failed attempts to interpret, Daniel is sent for and interprets the message as the end of the Babylonian kingdom. Later on that night, Belshazzar is killed and Babylon taken over. This makes for a perfect segue for the band Doomsday Hymn to plug in their instruments and play majestic thrash as the backdrop for the sacking of Babylon. Doomsday Hymn are a Brazilian band. One of the guitarists from another band I like, Seven Angels (on Bombworks Records), joined up with this band. To my ears, they sound as good and tight as Sepultura. They released their debut EP in 2013, and Rotweiler Records picked them up for this record. As I write, they are playing all over Central America for several months. The live footage I've seen showcases their great stage presence. Singer Gil Lopes is an aggressive frontman with a love for his craft. All the right ingredients are here: fast and technical guitar, a roaming, growly bass, brutal vocals, and tight, tight drums. Be forewarned that the album is sung entirely in Portuguese. Yes, this is an amazing effort, and it is not metalcore. (Doug Peterson)



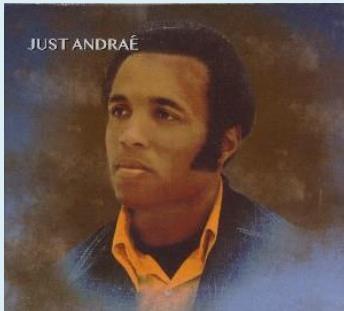
**Brian Godawa | *Jesus Triumphant* | 2015 | [godawa.com](http://godawa.com) |** I just finished reading Jesus Triumphant, the latest book in the "Chronicles of the Nephilim" series by Brian Godawa. I'm not one who searches the modern Christian section on Amazon to find something to read much less browse the "Christian Fiction" section. The "Chronicles of the Nephilim" series sits head and shoulders (pun intended) above what most of Christendom is dishing out these days. Brian doesn't shy away from sex and romance in these books but they are a far cry from the romance of other books in the genre like Pioneer Brides and Romance In The Amish Country. Brian also doesn't shy away from describing the depraved sexual acts of the fallen watchers. If any atheists are reading this, I'll give you a minute to compose yourself after I'm sure you're still laughing your ass off thinking, "shouldn't all Christian writing be in the fiction section?" Ok chuckles, let's continue on. I first found out about Brian's book series by listening to a podcast that is heavily focused on a futuristic end times scenario, think Left Behind. I don't hold this particular view but my interest in transhumanism and the Nephilim force me to these questionable theological places to get information. The interview was very informative but I probably wouldn't have bit if Brian wouldn't have politely dodged a question trying to relate what happened in the days of Noah with what is projected to happen during the end times. I was pleasantly shocked since almost all research on the Nephilim has some sort of end times relevance. So what is this series all about? Well, a lot of things. First off they are of course about the Nephilim (Genesis 6). A lot of teachers either shy away from the earliest and I think clearest interpretation of the text or go way out of Biblical bounds in regards to their importance. Brian does a fine job of staying within the Biblical framework. This series is also very well written, all of these books were hard to put down and I finished all of them within a few days. They also personalize Old Testament stories in a way that is refreshing. Brian has done some extensive historical research and fills in the details that humanizes and clarifies some of these Old Testament stories that when read with modern mindsets can seem strange, if not incomprehensible. He admittedly takes some liberty to flesh out the stories but holds to what could have happened. All of these books come with an extensive appendix where Brian lays out his reason for telling the story the way he does and some fascinating research on things like the cosmology of the Near East, a more Jewish version of the afterlife and how the Nephilim story really is front and center in all of the Old Testament and with this new novel, some of the New Testament as well. I was happy to read at the end of Jesus Triumphant that there is going to be another book about the fulfillment of the prophecies in AD 70. These books do contain some language and as I mentioned early some sex scenes, Brian describes them as PG-13. He has come out with an edited series for teens. These are also available as audio books. I've interviewed Brian several times in Down The Line and on the Basement Tapes. You can reference those for more info about the books and the storyline. Brian has also released the appendix of the books as one unit which has been an invaluable source for me as I study the Bible. (Mike Indest)



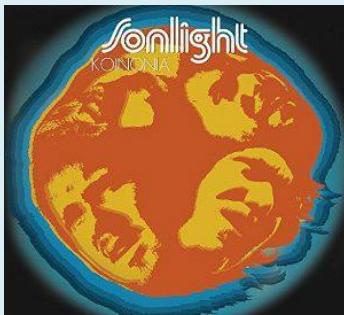
**Holy Blood | *Day of Vengeance* | 2015 Bombworks |** When I first heard that Holy Blood was dropping the folk side of their folk metal signature sound, I was more than a bit worried. Black/death/grind/etc bands can easily become cliché caricatures of their own genre once they lose that particular element that makes them unique. It was the folk that drew me into Holy Blood's sound initially. However, listening to Day of Vengeance quickly put those fears at ease. While the folk instruments are gone, the unique folk metal time signatures and vocalizations are still present, giving Holy Blood more than enough character to rise above the extreme metal pack. The vocal style is mostly growling that leans towards shouting – a nice mix that comes across well in the mix. This album seems to be a mostly one-man project now, but don't let that worry you. The songs are brutal, diverse, and powerful. It's almost as if an entire band is there. Personally, I find the artwork a bit creepy, but that's a minor nit-pick (and it may have been meant to be that way). Holy Blood may be making some changes, but fans of brutal extreme metal will still find plenty to dig into here. (Matt Crosslin)



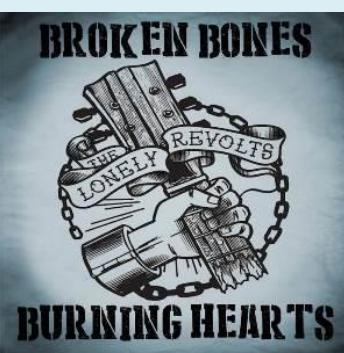
**Robert Vaughn & The Shadows | *Love And War: Special Edition* | 2000 Alternative Records | altrecords@aol.com** | Randy Layton does it again. Alternative Records has been excavating musical treasures and releasing them for 26 years. I picked up Robert Vaughn's Love & War album back in the late 80s due to the "genius" reputation Exit Records had earned. Exit was home to musical protégés wanting to hand a stick of dynamite to the CCM world. This was also the last album Exit released. With distribution from Island Records, Love & War received national radio exposure but a big splash it make not. The press compared Robert Vaughn to Little Steven and Elvis Costello. While those comparisons may guide enthusiasts with no prior intro to Robert Vaughn, his music definitely stands out on its own. Love & War is exemplary in how it meshes political themes throughout. Justice, the radio airplay single, may be identified as a rallying cry for the exiled in Central America: "Hear the justice like thunder, As it's rolling down the skies, Where are all the fatherless people who swore they'd never die." The following two cuts, Palace Of Tears and Dreaming Fields amalgamate lament and apocalyptic hope. Randy remastered this recording. Comparing the sonics of this CD to the original vinyl, I am pleased with a remarkably fuller sound. While the original recording is crisp, sound production standards of the 80's were more thin than current standards. This re-release also adds more than ten bonus tracks, most demos of tracks from the Love & War era. I especially enjoyed Writing On The Wall, a recording which also appears on Bootlevel, a CD compilation on Alternative Records in '94. Other distinguishing aspects of this album are the real drums and keys. Keyboardist John Nau can really make the ivory blend and soar in a guitar-driven band. I would favourably place this album in the same musical soundscape as The Alarm or Midnight Oil. If any of this description resonates with you, I recommend picking up this CD. Alternative worked on this back in 2000 and was never officially released. But if you want more information, contact altrecords@aol.com (Doug Peterson)



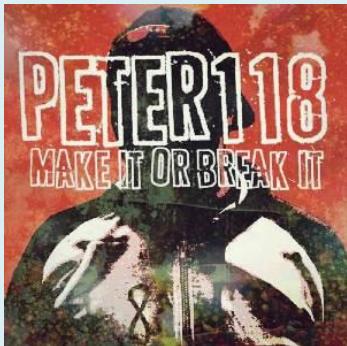
**Andraé Crouch | *Just Andraé* | 2014 Born Twice Records** | So this album is a bit outside of what we usually review at DTL, but I am always up for expanding my musical horizons. Most people have probably heard of Andraé Crouch, but this debut album is actually from the year before he became the Jesus Music super star. The interesting aspect that I pick up on most while listening to this album is that I hear shades of the early Sacred Steel sounds that eventually produced Robert Randolph and the Family band. An early influence on Randolph maybe? Possibly. The opening song ("You Ain't Livin'") shows a good deal of groove, swagger, guitar, and smooth vocals. I'll admit that I gravitate more towards the faster songs on this disc like the opener, "Come On Back My Child," and "Lord, You've Been Good to Me" than the slower CCM-ish ballads. But none of the songs are bad – even the cheesy country song "God Love the Country People" is enjoyable to listen to. As with all Born Twice re-issues, the remastering is top-notch, making this album sound new and fresh. The backing musicians on this album were also in a band called Sonlight, which will be reviewed next. Fans of smooth, jazzy, pop/contemporary/rock will want to check this one out. (Matt Crosslin)



**Koinonia | *Sonlight* | 2014 Born Twice Records** | Another stretch for DTL, but also another quality early Jesus Music release that fans with wide musical tastes should check out. Sonlight changed names to become Koinonia – this album was originally their self-titled release under their original name. This re-issue helps to make the connection with Koinonia, who made a name for themselves as a band and as well as backing up Andraé Crouch on his legendary albums. This album is a nice mixture of jazz, rock, pop, and progressive music. No matter what style is being played, the musicianship on display is top notch. As a bass guitar player myself, I can't help but notice the great bass lines throughout. The most rocking song ("Truth Of Salvation") is saved for the last, which is of course my favorite track – but I can see myself listening to the whole album when in the right mood. Another great re-issue by Born Twice Records. (Matt Crosslin)



**The Lonely Revolts | *Broken Bones Burning Hearts* | 2015 Thumper Punk Records** | The Lonely Revolts are back – gruff, rough and in your face. The hard thing about reviewing all of these new Christian punk rock bands is that punk was never really about innovation, but just getting loud and getting something off your chest... so it feels like I write the same thing for all of them. But Thumper Punk seems to find an endless supply of Christian punk bands that really seem to get punk. The Lonely Revolts are not wildly innovative or original, but I can't help but like it. There is just something about the passion and style of punk that I don't get tired of... as long as it is played by people that "get" it. The Lonely Revolts "get" it, and if you are like me and can't help but love punk, this is a release to check out. They really don't slow down until the last song – kind of. So check this out and hang on for yet another fun punk rock ride. (Matt Crosslin)



**Peter 118 | *Make It Or Break It* | 2015 Thumper Punk Records | [thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com](http://thumperpunkrecords.bandcamp.com) |** Peter 118 cranks out a quick ep of straight up punk with a few acoustic/oi! influences here and there. The songs sit back and find a groove more often than just going for full-on speed punk, which makes for good driving music. Well, for short drives that is :) . If you are looking for rock-out punk with anthemic vocals instead of speed and intensity (which is also not a bad thing), Peter 118 will be up your alley. Thumper punk: the place where quality Christian punk lives on. (Matt Crosslin)



**Bill Mallonee | *Lands and Peoples* | 2015 | [billmalloneemusic.bandcamp.com](http://billmalloneemusic.bandcamp.com) |** In the midst of what, to me, has been a bad year compared to last for new music releases 'Lands and Peoples' swoops in to save the day! Bill Mallonee is Americana, I honestly cannot think of anyone in the genre that has this consistent output. In my mind every bit as good as Dylan, Prine, Guthrie, Neil Young, etc. Listen to his discography, not a bad album in the giant bunch, not a bad track, not a bad riff, not a bad line. I'd put his catalog up against anyone in the genre and he'd come out on top. His latest is a traveling album: road songs, songs of the human struggle, and the spiritual relief the good Lord brings. The listener lives vicariously through Bill's life experience and stories through each song. Many of these songs give the feeling of the thoughts going through ones mind while on a long road trip during those quiet breaks through rural back highways when taking in Creation and the glories of God... You see the scenery and reflect on life as the country passes by at 70mph, you work things out, you remember the good, the bad, and the glorious. I need music like this to slow me down and take a breathe. This is the perfect follow up to last years 'Winnowing', the focus and care put into his last 6 albums is unmatched in the business. Each album is a complete thought, every track is where it should be, good start to finish. The kind of art you take some time out of your life to sit, relax, listen, and soak it in. His uncompromising soul is poured out with every line and shows him as one of the finest lyricist to ever grab a guitar on each and every album. (Josh Lory)



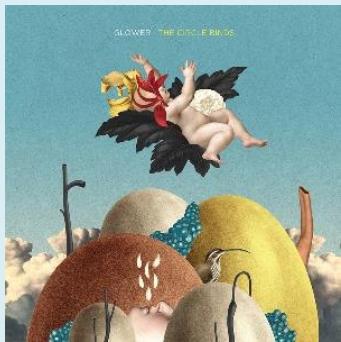
**Doug Burr | *White Night Black Light* | 2015 Velvet Blue Music | [velvetbluemusic.com](http://velvetbluemusic.com) |** I am behind on this review, as the full-length is already out. But based on these few songs alone, I need to get the full length. The first track, "White Night, Black Light," is a Doug Burr going to the next level, mixing in a Wovenhand-ish, Nick Cave-ish sensibility that is still all his own. Things slow down a bit for the somber and beautiful "Visible Noise." Then Burr goes for an Americana romp on "Never Gonna Be Young Again." Two songs on the 7-inch, three on the download, and I believe some aren't on the full length. I love when an artist I already loved takes their craft up a few notches. (Matt Crosslin)



**Rapture | *Trials EP* | 2015 OnTheAttack Records | [ontheattackrecords.bandcamp.com](http://ontheattackrecords.bandcamp.com) |** More hardcore? You bet. Rapture is another old school hardcore band, along the variety that leans more towards thrash with nu-metalish break downs. The vocals are a bit more higher pitched than you usually hear in hardcore – which works for me to differentiate their sound, but might not win over people who want the same old same old. But they do mix things up with gang-shouted vocals. A short ep that you can pick up for free from OnTheAttack records. (Matt Crosslin)



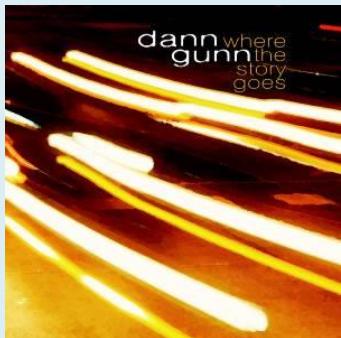
**Half Bomber | *Prink* | 2015 Veritas Vinyl | [veritasvinyl.bandcamp.com](http://veritasvinyl.bandcamp.com) |** I have reviewed many good punk bands recently, but Half Bomber quickly jumps to the top of the heap in my mind. Maybe it's because they really aren't strictly punk, but have a driving math rock/hardcore/alternative rock sensibility to their sound. I also hear a slight 90s emo influence in there. A bit hard to pin down exactly, but they are also not out somewhere in left field. There are only three songs on this EP (and a bonus live cover) that you can get for free at the Veritas Vinyl BandCamp site. Recommended if you want something a bit different but still catchy. (Matt Crosslin)



**Glower | *The Circle Binds* | 2015 Broken Circle Records | [brokencircles.limitedrun.com](http://brokencircles.limitedrun.com)** | Describing the sound of Glower is a bit hard – yes, there is an obvious 90s alt rock influence, but they aren't stuck in the past, either. Various influences from the 90s, 00s, and 10s are all mixed together and melded into a coherent style that really works. The album opener "Low Motion" is a catchy crunchy rock song that mixes the best of the last three decades. "Spectra" is a groove rock track that will definitely sound great live. "Black Hole Baby" is revisited from their split with ...Of Sinking Ships. Still a great song. Most of the album finds the band in "driving rock guitars" mode, but the albums closer "The Circle Binds" calms it down for a nice acoustic closer. Overall, a stellar album that will be released soon on vinyl. Grab a copy and check out the outstanding artwork while you are at it. Also, look for an interview in the next issue of Down The Line. (Matt Crosslin)



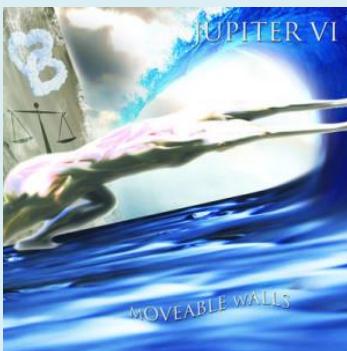
**Flukt | *Holocaust* | 2015 Sky Burns Black Records | [skyburnsblack.bandcamp.com](http://skyburnsblack.bandcamp.com)** | Flukt is described as old school black metal online, and that is pretty accurate description. This is a short ep (4 songs) – so if you somewhat like black metal, but don't feel like you can handle a full length disc, this is perfect for you. The mix on this ep is good and gives some distinction to various parts of the song, which is what I like to hear in black metal. The musicianship is also fairly tight, so the overall effect comes across as more professional than many of the black metal bands that are out there. If you have been jonesing for some new extreme music, I recommend this as a good fix. Intense, brutal, black. (Matt Crosslin)



**Dann Gunn | *Where The Story Goes* | 2015 | [danngunn.bandcamp.com](http://danngunn.bandcamp.com)** | Way back in the 90s, an unknown band by the name of Velocipede came out of nowhere with a sound few were familiar with, grabbed a record deal with R.E.X. Records, released a record that gained critical acclaim, and disappeared about as quickly as they appeared on the scene. For those wondering what happened to the band, front man Dann Gunn has been releasing solo albums every few years on his own. Where The Story Goes is his latest solo outing, which shows Gunn still know how to write a catchy tune and dial in just the perfect amount of heaviness. Gunn's passionate vocals are the centerpiece here – while most people that go for the "power-house" style vocals sound like they are straining to birth a dinosaur while singing, Gunn's vocals come out smooth and natural. The overall sound here is a bit hard to classify exactly – the crushing guitars of Velocipede are still present (although a little less distorted and easier to discern in the mix than they were on Sane), but some parts have an industrial metal vibe, while others swerve into 90s guitar alternative territory. This is quality music better than most songs on the radio, but of course you won't hear them playing there because there is not a hint of Coldplay or Mumford in the mix. Which is a good thing. Check this out on BandCamp and then grab a download or CD to support independent musicians making great music. (Matt Crosslin)



**Mike Indest | *The Moment Before You Arrive* | 2015 | [mikeindest.bandcamp.com](http://mikeindest.bandcamp.com)** | Mike Indest: poet, prophet, musician, theologian, podcaster, tour guider... the man of many hats. He kind of has his own sound that is easy to recognize once you start listening to his music. Alternative / indie / folk / melancholy / deep – if all of that rolled into one was a thing. This time around he has teamed up with Dw Dunphy as producer to add a new direction to his sound that is different but still Indestian. Not sure what they are feeding these DTL Collective peeps (especially since we don't pay them anything, not even peanuts), But it seems they are all turning in personal best recordings recently. Of course, the glue behind the collective is Indest and his podcast, so it only makes sense that the man that has driven many of the Collective to take it up a notch has stepped things up himself. Here's the deal: you can listen or download this album for free at BandCamp, so all I am really trying to convince you to do is go give it a spin. I'm pretty sure that you will love it once you try it. But I get it – the problem is that you have so much to do that you need something to convince you to click the play button. You see, Indest and Dunphy are fans of many of the bands we cover here at DTL. They (and the Collective) would be the bands and artists getting signed to the labels we all used to hold dear if they were still around. They have the talent and the song writing ability to prove it. They just need you to give them a shot. So click the link below and click the play button, and then download it once you love it. Download counts really do matter to these indie BandCamp bands. (Matt Crosslin)



**Luxury | *Trophies* | 2014 | [luxury.bandcamp.com](http://luxury.bandcamp.com)** | How can a band like Luxury take so much time off from recording and still manage to pull together a full album that sounds like they never dropped a beat? Must be something in the beards. If 90s indie rock had been able to keep growing and moving forward instead of turning into another musical cliché, I bet it would sound a lot like *Trophies*. Throw in a few modern sounds and a handful of retro-80s influences and you have the unique mix that is Luxury. For those that put off supporting the Kickstarter because you weren't sure if they could pull off another classic, time to repent and go order this now. I don't think physical products are available yet, but you can get the download by pre-ordering the vinyl. I can't wait for the vinyl to arrive. (Matt Crosslin)

**Steve Taylor & The Perfect Foil | *Goliath* | 2014 Splint Entertainment** | You have probably read the hype on this album, so why should I review this album again? Because it really is that great, and some of you cynical music diehards out there might need one more gushing review to win you over. I would never, ever gush in a review, but to call this album a great record is an understatement. To be honest, I wasn't quite sure about this album based on the singles that were released before it came out. They were good, but worthy of the collaborators that came together to make them? I was on the fence. But listening to the whole product from beginning to end kicked me in the teeth and knocked me flat off that fence. When I came to, I was on the convinced side. So what does that mean to those still sitting on the fence? This works as an album. Once you get this as an album, even the individual songs will sound like they work better as a single. And come on – it's Steve Taylor, Jimmy Abegg, John Mark Painter, and Pete Furler. Right, I know fans of the first three might be suspicious of the last one, but I think he's kind of proven himself over the past few years to those that never got into the Newsboys. This has all of the wit, satire, quirk, and rock that you would come to expect from this combination of artists. So set the jaded cynicism aside (there is a Mumford & Sons album coming out soon that is probably more deserving of it, anyways) and give this one a spin. (Matt Crosslin)

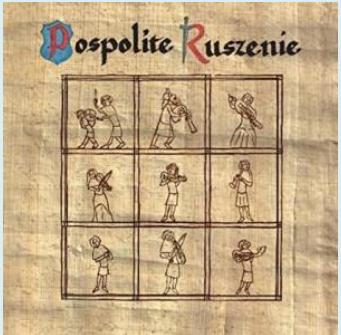
**Jupiter 6 | *Moveable Walls* | 2014 Roxx Records | [roxxrecords.storenvy.com](http://roxxrecords.storenvy.com)** | Jimmy Brown of Deliverance/Fearful Symmetry returns with a new Jupiter 6 album. The CD liner may only list five songs, but this is a full length album. The opening track is an epic song that almost reaches the 20 minute mark. Of course, it is broken down into several sections, so it never really gets boring. This time around, Jupiter 6's mixture of heavy alternative is more influenced by Pink Floyd than David Bowie, but it still works well. *Moveable Walls* is more melodic than *Back From Mars* – nothing really seems to hit the same fist pumping groove that the first album had in places. This is more along the lines of thinking man/progressive metal than industrial metal. If you missed out the pre-order, you might have also missed the chance to get the bonus disc of unreleased material. Better hurry if you want to grab that one. Brown continues to display his musical flexibility. (Matt Crosslin)

**Kissing Cousins | *In With Them* | 2014 Velvet Blue Music | [velvetbluemusic.com](http://velvetbluemusic.com)** | The cousins are back with a 7-inch/EP of dark rock goodness. The physical vinyl has two songs, but the download comes with two extra bonus songs. The title track has a melody that grabs a hold of you and won't let go. This is followed with the haunting b-side "Cover Me" that serves as a perfect companion to the a-side. The bonus tracks in the digital version continue on the dark haunting path laid out in the first two tracks. This ep will just whet your appetite for a full-length, but I still recommend checking it out. (Matt Crosslin)

**White Lighter | *White Lighter* | 2014 Northern Records | [store.northernrecords.com](http://store.northernrecords.com)** | White Lighter snarls through so many gruesome tracks of guitar rock awesomeness that it's hard to not love this. The players list reads like a "who's who" of underground alternative rock superstars: Mark Salomon, Steve Dail, Andy Prickett, David Brotherton, and Trey Many are the players (with Jason Martin, J.R. McNeely, and T.W. Walsh behind the scenes). The sound is kind of like Neon Horse after getting a Black Sabbath enema. Songs like "Son Of Dawn" and "That's Right" just pummel you with driving rhythms, while other songs like "City Sailor" bring that Sabbath doom. This is music best served on vinyl, and you better bet Northern Records gives you that option. (Matt Crosslin)



**Glenn Rowlands | *Vinegar Foot* | 2015 | [glennrowlands.bandcamp.com](http://glennrowlands.bandcamp.com)** | Glenn Rowlands is back again with what may be one of his heaviest solo offerings yet. There seems to be a bit more Black Sabbath in the usual mix of Led Zep-fueled classic rock goodness. Eight music tracks and a bonus testimony from Glenn himself round out this disc – a little on the short side, but no filler to be found. You can also hear a little bit of the tumbleweed sounds of I Think I Can coming through in the second half of the album – a nice touch that adds some interesting texture to the album. Rowlands doesn't clone anybody – he just keeps putting out album after album of what I would call "good old hard rock." Themes range from Church unity, to past demons, to resurrection. Trust me – this is not a half-baked wannabe indie rock effort. Glenn Rowlands is the real deal and I can promise you if you like the way I am describing this, you will like it. Listen for free on BandCamp to see for yourself. (Matt Crosslin)



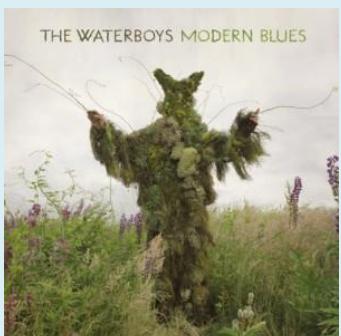
**Pospolite Ruszenie | *Pospolite Ruszenie* | 2014 | [pospolite.ruszenie.pl](http://pospolite.ruszenie.pl)** | Pospolite Ruszenie plays a brand of folk metal that is more on the metal side than the black/death metal side. They also are a bit different than the average folk metal band in that you get a great blend of traditional polish instruments and modern heavy metal. According to the press release: "The record showcases a modern approach to the more or less well-known musical and lyrical masterpieces of the Polish Mediaeval, Renaissance and Baroque period." That pretty much describes what you get on this album – but don't think you are getting an album of wimpy music. While a few songs do slow down for some variety, the majority of the songs are in your face metal. Everything from the vocals to the modern instruments to the classical instruments are well crafted. There is a lot of talent on display here. I highly recommend this to fans of folk metal that might something different than the usual folk metal, or fans of any type of heavy music that want something a bit different. (Matt Crosslin)



**Unteachers | *A Human Comedy* | 2014 Veritas Vinyl | [unteachers.bandcamp.com](http://unteachers.bandcamp.com)** | When I said A Human Comedy is a serious contender for album of the year in 2014, I wasn't being flippant. This album stands head and shoulders above other albums in a year that saw a large number of really good albums. Stephen Mark Sarro and company have utilized what worked well for Tantrum of the Muse, taken it to the next level, put their own stamp on it, and ripped your face off in the process. Their Bandcamp page labels this as "metal noise progressive rock," while I referred to it as "progressive punk hardcore" in my iTunes list... which just tells you how hard it is to classify the sound emanating from your speakers when consuming this slab of brilliance. "Fear Of Silence" makes an appearance from their previous split release, which is one of the many high points of the album. I also liked the twisted groove they found with "Swim With A Knife" as well as the time-bending album closer "Death Has Been Swallowed." But there are really no songs to skip here. This is also available on vinyl with high quality packaging. Trust me on this one: you won't be disappointed if you want some original music with meat to it. (Matt Crosslin)



**Judgment Day | *The Altar* | 2015 On The Attack Records | [ontheattackrecords.bandcamp.com](http://ontheattackrecords.bandcamp.com)** | I'm still pretty amazed that old school hardcore is having such a comeback recently. Judgement Day sounds like they could be the lead off track from Helpless Amongst Friends Volume 23 – if that series had kept going. Not everything is stuck in the 90s on here – "Seek" and other songs have some break neck thrash-like parts crammed in between the sludgy break downs. These guys ooze passion and conviction – or should I say they hurl it out at excessive velocity? Intense hardcore that has my attention. (Matt Crosslin)



**The Waterboys | *Modern Blues* | 2015 Kobalt | [mikescottwaterboys.com](http://mikescottwaterboys.com)** | One of my musical highlights last year was seeing The Waterboys live for the first time. They were on the Fisherman's Blues box set tour. The live set jammed in as many classics as they could and they played one new song. The songs was called "Still a Freak", a straight up blues number. With their new album called Modern Blues it seemed like they were making no bones about where this record was going musically. fact only a few songs on the album are bluesy. Most of the album is middle of the road rock and roll (think "Only Love Can Set Me Free" from The Alarm). If you were hoping for The Waterboys to retread old territory there's really none of that here. Lyrically it's a bit different as well. Lot's of words making it seem like the lyrics were written and then added to the music. I'm not saying it's a bad thing, just different. verall the production is tight and after about 4 listens there are a few hooks that I just can't get out of my head. Standout tracks so far are "Destinies Entwined," "November Tale," and "The Girl Who Slept For Scotland". (Mike Indest)



*Praga Church Interior 5* by Rick McDonough